

DEBATING THESIS SUPERVISION

Perspectives from a university education department



Edited by
Aslam Fataar



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A Department of Education Policy Studies occasional publication
Stellenbosch University

Debating thesis supervision: Perspectives from a university education department

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Foreword

This occasional publication from the Department of Education Policy Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch could not be timelier. As the publication goes to print, so a call is going out nationally to all universities and educational research organisations to come together in a conference entitled ‘The state of play in educational research in South Africa: Practices and perspectives’. This national debate focuses on questions that are germane to the development of research and postgraduate studies in this country, like how we develop theory in and for the global South, the link between research, democracy and citizenship, the role of public intellectuals in South Africa, and a range of other important themes.

This publication focuses on one crucial challenge in the broader South African arena, namely how we build the next generation of researchers. Postgraduate qualifications are the *sine qua non* of such research development – and the publication challenges us to think about how established academics might best play a role in such research development.

The publication does this in two ways. At the most immediate level, it brings together a set of writings on postgraduate supervision by a group of highly respected and experienced supervisors. This in itself is a contribution, as it allows other existing and potential supervisors to enter a domain that is often very private, taking place behind the closed doors (and sometimes fragile egos) of individual supervisors.

At a deeper level, the publication ‘models’ exactly what one might expect from postgraduate supervision and research development. The articles challenge, theorise, reflect, take issue with, probe, demand and doubt – and in so doing show us exactly what one might expect in the research arena. That these supervisors are willing to model this kind of reflective theorising in the public domain takes us so much further in advancing the quality of research in this country.

As a Faculty, we invite the broader educational research community to respond to the arguments presented in this publication. May the debate continue!

Maureen Robinson

Dean: Faculty of Education, Stellenbosch University

Introduction

Aslam Fataar, Jan Heystek, Berte van Wyk and Azeem Badroodien

Department of Education Policy Studies, Stellenbosch University

The Department of Education Policy Studies decided to produce this occasional publication on the topic of thesis supervision as a way of bringing our academic labour in this hitherto ‘invisible’ area into academic view. This is in contrast to the plethora of awareness, debate and published work on the quality of teaching and learning and research production. Thesis supervision commonly takes place in one-on-one consultation arrangements between academics as supervisors and postgraduate students behind the proverbial closed door. Its pedagogical and intellectual entailments remain largely invisible and conceptually under-explored. There is very little systematic scholarly focus or conceptual consideration of this important dimension of academic work, and departments do not seem to engage in conversation and systematic approaches that address their productivity in this area. Recent articles (see Jansen, Herman and Pillay 2004; Herman 2008) and special issues of edited journals (SAJHE, 2011a and 2011b; *Acta Academica* 2010) brought thesis supervision to academic consciousness in South Africa, placing the topic firmly on our agenda for further academic exploration and consideration of the need for systematic approaches to improve throughput rates and the quality of theses. The Department of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University has prioritised such approaches in recent years.

Continuing in the same vein as the work referred to above, this publication offers an additional perspective. We present this compilation as a ‘strand of argument’ or a ‘self-referenced’ conversation that problematises key aspects embedded in thesis supervision. Departmental members Yusuf Waghid (in 2007) and Aslam Fataar (in 2005) each published unrelated articles on this topic, the latter while still working at the University of the Western Cape. Fataar focused on student identity negotiation of the doctoral proposal supervision process, arguing that the specific nature of the supervisory relationship turns on the generation of authority and trust. He argues that it

is the nature of the supervision relationship that enables students to go on to propose a viable academic enquiry. Waghid argues in his article for the notion ‘critical friendship’, which can be seen to provide a robust understanding of supervision as informed by dialogicality, compassion and critical support. It is through supervision as critical friendship that the supervisor is able to position and capacitate his or her students to produce rigorous and analytically compelling theses.

It was, however, Wayne Hugo, a curriculum specialist from the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s School of Educational Development in Pietermaritzburg, and Nelleke Bak, a fellow member of our department, who established a line of conversation between Fataar and Waghid’s articles and their responses. The articles by Hugo and Bak are characterised by gentleness, nuance and respectful critique, hallmarks of responsible academic work intended to elicit rigorous and inclusive debate.¹

Hugo’s (2009) article was an appreciation, critique and extension of our positions. He argued persuasively that our accounts needed to be supplemented by an explicit discussion of the broader academic communities that graduate students are inducted into when they are involved in thesis work. In other words, his was an attempt to insert the epistemic dimension into the debate.

Bak, in turn, following a logical conceptual clarification style that seems to have diminished over the last 15 years of educational scholarship in this country, problematised core dimensions of each of the three articles. Her conceptual springboard was an appreciation and critique of each of the three contributions. She offered a careful logical exposition of the conceptual entailments and limitations of each, which gave her a platform to provide a sharper appreciation of the professional and authoritative dimensions that co-constitute graduate thesis supervision. Together, these four articles provide a rich and compelling line of argument worthy of careful study, critique and elaboration.

¹ We thank the journals *Journal of Education* (Fataar 2005), *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (Waghid 2007) and the *South African Review of Higher Education* (Hugo 2009; Bak 2011) and their respective publishers for permission to reproduce the articles in this publication. For a fuller appreciation of Waghid’s views, we suggest that his article in this compilation should be read in conjunction with another article published by him in 2005 in the *Journal of Education* (Vol. 37: 225-241) entitled ‘Education, imagination and forgiveness’.

We thought that two further additions were necessary to serve as a platform for deeper conceptual elaboration and controversy. First, we invited the four contributors each to write a short reply, with the aim of clarifying their initial arguments or considering aspects of the others' perspectives. Consequently, the four articles presented here are followed by replies from each of the authors. This achieved the objective of exemplifying responsible and rigorous debate on the one hand, while providing space for conceptual clarification and elaboration on the other. Second, the publication closes with a postscript by Eli Bitzer, higher education expert in our Faculty, who in his contribution reminds us of the importance of other equally relevant dimensions of thesis work. We suggest that the collective writings in this occasional publication invite engagement and critique, and it is to such an endeavour that we now invite readers of this publication to respond.

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Negotiating student identity in the doctoral proposal development process: A personal reflective account

Aslam Fataar

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Abstract

The article focuses on the interpersonal and formative dynamics involved in the PhD proposal supervision process. It is a reflective account of my supervisory experiences with two of my doctoral students. The article discusses the *authoritative* basis upon which these two supervisory relationships were founded, negotiated and substantiated. Key to the supervision process has been an awareness of and engagement with the ways the students' personal identities initially informed their respective approaches to doctoral study. Rooted within an understanding of their biographies, the article discusses how the supervisory process navigated shifts in their personal approaches. I show how these shifts enabled them to identify their research foci and to pose an academically acceptable set of research questions. The development of my own reflexivity about my authority as a doctoral supervisor is central to this account.

Introduction

The focus of this article is the dynamic and formative relationship embedded in the doctoral supervision process. It concentrates specifically on the proposal development process. It extends on an article by Jansen, Herman and Pillay (2004: 79-102) in which they employ the notion 'research learning' to discuss the developmental and learning experiences of a cohort of doctoral students while working on their doctoral proposals. Jansen et al. (2004: 79) suggest that 'there are no clear steps to be followed in writing of the proposal and that the journey each student traverses is filled with obstacles, reversals, breakdowns and, yet, progress'. My article is a reflective account of such a

journey, of my interaction with two of my students in our co-navigation of the personal, relational and scholarly dynamics involved in the proposal development process. While the doctoral proposal has to be underpinned by an appropriate academic question that suggests an interesting intellectual puzzle worthy of scholarly study, the supervisory process often determines the student's approach to the study and the nature of the academic questions posed. The key conceptual issue of the article revolves around the shifting identity of these students as they navigate the complex personal identity terrain involved in the process of developing a credible doctoral proposal. The nature of the relationship between my two doctoral students and myself as a supervisor is thus under the analytical spotlight.

The article is based on my personal observations and reflective notes made throughout the proposal supervision process and two two-hour interviews with each of the students. The first interview solicited crucial biographical information aimed at understanding the students' biographical/personal basis that informed their respective approaches to the PhD process. The data from this first interview illustrate how certain formative processes in the students' biography have influenced their approach to their doctoral study, the ways in which they approached and negotiated the proposal writing process, and the nature of the study they proposed. The second interview focused on the supervision relationship, the negotiated nature of the supervision process, and the personal relational basis in terms of which a successful proposal could be produced. The interviews provided a means of explication, verification and corroboration of what is essentially a paper based on my own views about a process in which I was a key participant. I gave the two interviewees an opportunity to read two drafts of this paper, especially to check for factual inaccuracies about how the paper represented them personally. I used pseudonyms to refer to the students in the discussion below.

The article unfolds along two conceptual lines. The first concentrates on the personal approach to the development of the proposal by the students, and the subsequent conceptual engagement and relational dynamics involved in the supervision process. The supervision process was framed by the interaction between the scholarly identity of the supervisor on the one hand and the identities of the two students on the other. The second line of argument focuses on the reflexive adaptability of the supervisory process, specifically its ability to negotiate a shift by the students from what I would label a

‘normative stance’ to doctoral study to an appropriate analytical stance. Both students’ initial approaches to their doctoral studies and their specific foci and research questions were closely tied to their respective socialisation and ‘senses of self’, which, I argue, impeded them in their attempt to propose an analytically rigorous study. The article shows how the supervision process engaged with these firmly held personal approaches and the different routes travelled along this journey by the two students in successfully completing the proposal.

Conceptual framework

There is a paucity of literature on the affective dimensions of doctoral proposal supervision. Cryer (1997) discusses a range of common dilemmas in the supervision process, including the need to encourage originality and striking a balance between guiding students work on the one hand and allowing for freedom for independent expression on the other. Her work also focuses on relational questions that appear episodically during the supervision process. She raises questions about whether and how cultural differences interfere in the supervisory relationship, the extent to which the student should be provided with the space to acquire intellectual ownership of her study, and whether the student should be allowed to stray too far from the supervisor’s area of expertise (Cryer 1997: 3-12).

Connecting with the specific focus of this article, i.e. the relational and affective dimension of the supervisory process, Wright and Cochrane (2000: 192) suggest that science students are likely to complete their theses much quicker than students in the humanities. They did a study on the factors influencing successful completion of PhD theses in which they distinguish between the ‘external and intrinsic nature of the study in the sciences and the arts and its interaction with the student’s individual internal picture of the world’ (ibid.: 192). According to them scientific research requires the study of purportedly objective phenomena, which can be seen as outside the individual. They suggest that this may enable science students to separate their research from their internal psychological world, thus avoiding the research impinging on or challenging their identity or self-esteem. This is particularly true of the young science student who had not had many intervening and complicating life experiences. Wright and Cochrane suggest that ‘this might make research study in the sciences psychologically relatively

easy for individuals who are academically competent and practised but who have negotiated few developmental stages in life – often those who are younger in years' (ibid.: 192).

Doctoral study in the humanities, I would argue, can be considerably more subjective and requiring of exposure to judgements of the student's internal world, such as their values and belief systems and even the ability to display or control emotion. The humanities PhD exposes students to an element of personal risk and emotional investment, rooted as it is in understanding human and social processes. This makes their work more 'intrinsically challenging to their individual psychological equilibrium, thus bestowing the potential to affect their ability to function effectively' (Wright and Cochrane 2000: 193). Notwithstanding the somewhat sharp distinction Wright and Cochrane make between science and humanities students, they highlight the view that the doctoral supervision process involves a complex negotiation of the psychological and affective dimension of the student's personality make-up. This article provides a discussion of some of the affective processes in the context of my supervisory interaction with two such students preparing their doctoral proposal. Having to reconcile the personal, the political and the analytical, and having to engage with constructions of self, as I show below, is a crucial part of proposal writing. I have thus sought to understand the dynamic interaction between, on the one hand, my own construction and display of my role as supervisor, and the acquisition by the two students of an appropriate academic identity which made a successful doctoral proposal possible on the other. The article is an attempt to provide conceptual elaboration of Dison's position that 'the relationship between a student and supervisor or mentor is likely to be one of the most formative contexts in which the student's development of research capacity takes place' (ibid.: 14).

Complicit in the supervisory process: My authority as a supervisor

I joined the university as a junior lecturer in 1994, after having taught for six years at a high school. Most of my scholarly publications in the first years of my academic career were based on the politics of education. I published in the area of school access, youth political identity and teacher activism. My doctoral thesis, completed at the end of 1999, was a political economy analysis of education policy development during the 1990s. It was based

on an analysis of policy documents and some interviews that sought to understand the politics embedded in policy-making.

I have over the last five years begun to use more nuanced post-structural conceptual lenses with a view to understanding the multilayered complexity of education policy reform and practice. I subsequently published articles on higher education policy discourse, teacher biography, teaching cultures, and discourse and agency in Muslim community schools. I have applied a number of methods in the qualitative research tradition such as observations, interviews and discourse analysis.

My work had shifted to an analysis of agency processes, of the people involved in these processes, working with a mix of discourses and in different contexts. Something fundamental happened: my conceptual turn had forced me to become modest, to adopt an interpretive theoretical stance that emphasised *verstehen* (description and understanding). I have had to temper my own emancipatory interests in order to validate the authentic experiences of people. I have had to move from a politicist analytical logic to an analysis of confoundment and social reconfiguration, from an 'acting-upon-society' logic to an analysis of the intersubjective world of ordinary people in turbulent social circumstances as they reflexively establish and substantiate their social practices.

I have supervised a number of master's theses and have co-supervised one doctoral thesis.¹ I am the main supervisor of the two students discussed below. A professor in the Faculty of Education serves as the co-supervisor. Cryer (1997: 1-4) suggests that a successful supervisory relationship has to be based on the appropriate exercise of respect and authority, the breakdown of which may complicate the process and affect completion. The authority of the supervisor is generally rooted in her academic expertise in the student's area of study, her research and publications record, her knowledge of the relevant literature, and her knowledge and expertise in the appropriate methodological approaches. Authority is thus based on the supervisor's expert knowledge from which she derives epistemic credibility.

My view of myself as a supervisor is not unrelated to my age and relative inexperience as a PhD supervisor. I am younger than both the students

¹ This article was written in 2004. It reflects my supervision output and experience until 2004, which had changed considerably by 2012.

discussed below. I do not have the aura of experience to mediate my authority relations with the students which makes it easier for older, more experienced supervisors to be forthright and direct in their advice and guidance. The relational dynamics between the students and myself are different. As Cryer (1997: 6) suggests, as a new supervisor I tend to put in 'more time, effort and guidance than my more experienced counterparts, in the belief that it will prove their professionalism to themselves, their students, and their academic colleagues'. Cryer warns that this attitude can delay or even prevent the student's transition to independence.

A crucial determinant of the supervisory relationship has thus been the way in which I have been negotiating authority relations throughout in the supervisory process. The process has been established, as it should, on the basis of authority governed by the scholarly expertise of the supervisor. The nature of this relationship is, however, seldom stable, always somewhat tenuous, negotiated and renegotiated, and as in my case, when the supervisor is younger than the students, has required sensitive management of interpersonal dynamics. I have had to be very aware of the view that participation in the learning relationship involves complex relations of power. I was particularly conscious of Dison's (2004: 14) view that 'the supervisor's role is to provide access to the student through negotiation and practice of meaning, but the supervisor may also with or without conscious intention hinder the access of the student to becoming a fully competent member of the community'. I discuss below the contingent and personal dynamics of this ultimately successfully negotiated relationship.

The 'schooled' socialised identities of James and Faheem

James's and Faheem's biographies display remarkable similarity with regard to what I would label the 'schooled' identities they acquired within the socialisational context of their family and communal life and their early school-going experiences. Based on data from the first interview, this section illustrates how certain formative processes in the students' biographies have influenced their approach to their doctoral study and the nature of the study they proposed. Their different 'senses of self', constructed during their childhood and beyond, have had an impact on the type of intellectual questions they initially posed. The supervision interaction around the

proposal has been framed fundamentally by an awareness of the ways in which their different personalities shaped their approach to the PhD.

They both hail from big working-class families. James was the youngest child and Faheem the second youngest. They both felt fortunate to be afforded the opportunity to complete their schooling and become first-generation university graduates. Their mothers were very influential in encouraging them to do well at school. The school was presented as a way of getting on in life, and for getting out of their current class status. They were often reminded about the privilege of attending school while most of the other siblings had to work, often to finance them to complete their schooling.

They both loved school, their teachers, books, reading, writing and studying, and the socialisational atmosphere of being at school and doing school work. They were diligent and regular school-goers. Their image of self was cultivated early on by encouraging and positive messages about their intellectual prowess. James was interpellated as the 'clever baby brother' while Faheem was referred to endearingly as 'hy's 'n slimmetjie' (he's a clever one). Having always been top of their class, they had both acquired a strong personal image as academic achievers reinforced by academic success throughout their school and university careers. The choice to do doctoral studies was partially motivated by their sense of self as academic achievers. From the interviews it seemed clear that their self identities are strongly tied to academic achievement and the acknowledgment acquired from it. Doing the PhD could be regarded as an outcome of an image of academic achievement and its role in acknowledging and affirming their sense of self.

Both were affected very deeply by the student and youth uprisings in 1976. They became politically conscious and active largely in the context of these uprisings. Their political identities were cultivated at high school and mushroomed into activism when they went to university. Throughout, and despite the politics of opposition of which they were a part, they remained close to their schooled identities, staying the course as academic achievers. They both sailed through university; James at the University of Cape Town where he could never quite fit into the white-dominated climate of the mid-seventies, and Faheem at the University of the Western Cape where his academic achievements secured him a prized place in the Sociology Honours programme. James passed his Higher Diploma in Education programme with distinction. Both had highly successful careers as young teachers in schools

on the Cape Flats, where they lived out their professional lives as progressive activist teachers. James left for the USA, where he completed a master's degree in Education by 1987, and Faheem completed a master's degree in classroom action research in 1990, scoring a distinction for his mini-thesis. Their schooled identities, based on academic achievement, while enriched and informed by politics and activism among others, thus remained a key part of their personal make-up.

Divergences in their schooled identities fundamentally impacted on their respective personal and intellectual approaches to the doctoral process. Their approach to politics was different. James was a pragmatist who worked in the political background, while Faheem became a youth leader who loved ideas. For James an idea is only worthwhile to the extent that it has practical value. He makes a distinction between on the one hand those young political activists, his friends whom he grew up with, who loved ideas and could convey them eloquently in the mass meetings, who took leadership and public roles, and those on the other hand who chose to play a political and organisational role in the background. James took on the role of secretary, organiser or vice-chairperson, the organiser of the social programme, the type of role he was good at as a child when he organised sport events for the kids in the neighbourhood, instead of playing soccer or cricket. James's pragmatism is tied to what he does best, i.e. to organise and make things happen, such as conscientisation programmes or pamphleteering for the bus or meat boycott. Not quite an impatience with the 'mere display of ideas,' his motivation by the practical usefulness of ideas, as I explain below, had an influence on his initial doctoral focus and the type of academic questions he posed. James's preoccupation with doing a PhD in order to understand the impact of a development programme on poor communities could be seen as influenced by and is analogous to his concern for the pragmatic.

Faheem's childhood socialisation took place in a communal context characterised by religious and cultural influences. He grew up in the image of his father, who was a community Imam, but died when Faheem was seven years old. He speaks about being influenced by the presence of his father's religious and secular books, his father's business and cosmopolitan networks and interests, and the general texture of his father's social and community welfare work. Faheem was always reminded of his father's leadership role, often pressurised to follow in his father's footsteps, and, as

he suggests, had serendipitously developed a strong sense of self as a leader of people. He became a progressive, if traditional, Cape Town Imam. As a leader of a religious student organisation Faheem read widely, admitting to the fact that he loved ideas, which together with his strong leadership personality influenced him to carry his ideas and perspectives of the world with confidence and pride. His emancipatory commitments, his 'love for justice', cultivated during his schooling while observing the injustices meted out by cruel teachers to his struggling fellow students, translated into a strong normative stance. Analogous to the critical theory perspectives that underpinned the activism of the popular educational movements during the 1980s, Faheem was committed to changing the world. This normative stance would impact directly on his approach to his PhD study, motivated as it was to linking his study closely to contributing to changing the world.

Both James's and Faheem's initial understandings of the doctoral study, a study of impact and a study contributing to change respectively, were not directly congruent with the interpretive scholarly stance that I had recently adopted in my scholarship. This incongruence informed the nature of the relationship of authority of the supervisory process. My understanding was that as supervisor I had to establish this congruence for the supervisory process to be successful. The rest of this paper is a description of the way in which the supervision process between myself and James and Faheem, with oversight by the co-supervisor, navigated and interrogated their initial approaches to the study and the proposal production process that followed.

Coming to the doctoral study

The different ways in which the two students came to the doctoral process, accompanied by their specific concerns and intellectual interests and attitudes, played an important role in the way the respective supervisory relationships were set up and negotiated. While their specific personal approaches were informed by their distinct 'schooled' identities, i.e. one pragmatic and the other ideas-orientated, my relationship with them depended on how I understood, adapted to and worked with their personal expectations of the supervision process. Key to the supervision process was whether, and the basis on which, they were able to acquire and incorporate the necessary comportment shift to enable them to ask appropriate research questions, on the basis of which they would develop the doctoral proposal.

My role as an engaging supervisor, having become aware of and sensitive to the personal dynamics involved in such a shift, arguably played a key role in the students' successfully producing the proposals (in the interviews both students strongly underscored this role that I played).

Both James and Faheem toyed with the idea of PhD study for a long time. James was immediately offered a place on a PhD programme after he finished his MEd, at the same university in the USA. He refused. While he felt disappointed by the quality of this world-class university's programme in Educational Studies, at the age of 27, in 1987, James wanted to head home to participate in the educational initiatives of the popular liberation movement. On his return he embarked on a range of educational development work, from contract university and college teaching to non-government organisational work. With the advent of democracy in 1994 he entered government, first embarking on a stint at provincial level followed by work in the Adult Education section of the national Department of Education (DOE). He learnt some important lessons about the complexity and frustration of bureaucratic functioning, and acquired valuable insights into the limits and possibilities of state reform. But, James's desire to concretely contribute to change at the level of human capacity-building led to him resigning from the DOE. He set up his own educational services outfit, contracting among others with government and development agencies. His company was appointed to design, manage and coordinate a massive two-year public works adult learning programme for the Department of the Environment and Tourism.

Close to the end of the project James's company completed an evaluation that sought to measure the impact of this programme on the participants. He collected valuable hard data on aspects of the learning achievements, but was left questioning his role in this programme and whether it had any 'real' impact on the adult learners. He was concerned with what happened to them after the programme, and whether and how they had been enabled to improve themselves and their communities. These concerns, I would argue, led him to making a decisive shift in the direction of his doctoral study. James spoke in the interview about how he thought doctoral study could provide him with a way of asking questions and providing explanations about the impact of his work. I would suggest that his personal biographic trajectory, having until then shown a strong commitment to pragmatic change, had now shifted somewhat to his wanting to understand how change really

works. While his involvement in adult development and learning gave him an opportunity to give expression to his desire to contribute actively to change, his perplexity with the programme's outcomes led him to adopt a reflexive attitude about the nature and impact of development initiatives. At this point James's new-found reflexivity began to link to his strong, if by now somewhat residual, 'schooled' sense of self. The doctoral study, I would argue, represented his next biographical step. PhD study would arguably provide him with a platform for combining features of his academic achieving self-image with a new-found concern for going beyond, or perhaps questioning, the pragmatism of programme implementation, to an understanding of the complexity of development and change.

Faheem began toying with the idea of starting a PhD almost immediately upon completion of his MEd. His determination to get going on his next phase of study filtered through an intermittent 10-year process of attempting to gain access to what he termed 'the appropriate academic expertise'. During the early 1990s he acquired an interest in museum studies largely as a result of an artefact collection and display project he was running at the mosque where he was officiating as Imam. He tells a compelling story of approaching different academics in four higher education institutions in the Western Cape. The first three attempts were based on exploring whether he could find someone to supervise a potential PhD topic on the study of museums. Inaccessibility and lack of interest and feedback from the academics he approached at two institutions and technical problems with registration at another left him despondent and dejected.

Faheem's search for a credible academic environment found an outlet in the Sociology Department of one of the universities. By 2001 he had done a number of MA modules at this university in the areas of Development Studies, Culture and Community. His decision to leave teaching for the business world had caused his interest in the academic study of education to be placed on the back burner, overtaken by broader concerns for economic and community development. These courses brought him back firmly into the realm of study and academic work, exposing him to some of the latest thinking on social development and change.

Faheem's strong religious identity had always predisposed him towards a doctoral topic on the Muslim community. A fortuitous event brought him back to a study on education. Bored with business, he went back to school for

an 18-month teaching stint to gain first-hand experience of transformation processes on the ground. He wanted to find out for himself how teachers and schools were responding to expectations of pedagogical change. He seemed there to have seamlessly resumed his activist teacher role, getting involved particularly in the school's extra-mural and enrichment programmes. He became animated by the ways in which teachers were discussing and responding to, or mostly finding ways to ignore, the HIV/Aids pandemic. Faheem described his school experience as one of 'great expectations and great disappointments'. He felt that the exercise of managerial power at the school and the curriculum, learning and teaching processes were more akin to 'recycling of old discourses' than the empowering progressive pedagogy that he expected. He kept a copious diary about the interaction between new policy expectations and the old-styled didactic ways in which learning and teaching were approached at the school. The idea of the PhD becoming an educational study was thus concretised in the context of his observing how the teachers functioned in the school. His approach to his study prior to starting the supervision process was informed by a firmly held understanding of the requirement for teachers to adapt to policy expectations for pedagogical change. In the supervisory relationship I have had to establish a basis to engage with Faheem's firmly held views about the world of teachers, arguing for an appropriate distance from both his assumptions and his closeness to what he observed in practice. I believed that only such a distancing would enable him to ask appropriate research questions about the complex nature of teacher discourses and practices.

Setting up the supervisory relationship as 'mutual engagement'

The way in which the supervisory relationship was set up played a decisive role in determining the nature and outcome of the mutual engagement that characterised our collaborative deliberations. The proposal process was characterised by building of trust and respect. As supervisor I developed respect for their personal commitment to the PhD process and their scholarly potential, while they, as they concurred in the interviews, had acquired respect for my academic authority and ability to serve as their supervisor. Once accomplished, the process proceeded relatively smoothly, but not without difficult moments, which, based on the nurtured trust and respect, were

resolved productively. My own engagement in the supervisory relationship, however, unfolded around the specific personal and intellectual bases upon which each of the two students approached the proposal process. While my interaction with them shared many similarities in process and outcome, each brought his personal or 'normative' expectations to the process which impacted on the nature of the relationship.

During the first few months I encouraged both students to read as much of my work as possible. I was very concerned to establish the relationship on the basis of my academic authority, which I thought could only be realised if they understood the nature, scope and scholarly veracity of my work. I asked them to read my earlier work based on policy analysis, especially my doctoral thesis, as well as my current work on culture and identity. I was particularly keen for them to understand the intellectual shift I made from policy documents analysis and the application of what I now regard as a simplistic analytical framework to a qualitative interpretive research approach. I wanted them to understand that the type of study I would be willing to supervise had to connect with my academic interests and current scholarly and methodological approaches. Perhaps more fundamentally, getting them to read my own work was a way of displaying my academic capability, which, if they decided to proceed with me as a supervisor, would give them some general expectations of the potential intellectual quality of our interactions. I wanted them to be comfortable with the intellectual quality of the development and learning practices that would make up the supervisory process. Both students revealed in the interviews that they had read some of my work. They said that they had found it stimulating and had developed by reading it, an appreciation of the intellectual quality it portended for the relationship.

An incisive dynamic in the earlier months was the quality of the conversations we had in the supervisory meetings. I met the students often, generally twice per month. For each meeting they were required to read widely and produce a written piece. The meetings were thus always based on something they had written and e-mailed to me beforehand. This gave me an opportunity to read their written work carefully, make notes for conversation, provide leads for further reading, and engage with them about the nature and focus of their potential study. I tried my best never to be prescriptive, and to respect their views and the type of study they thought they wanted to do. My leverage or

influence was gained by getting them to focus on what a researchable doctoral study might be, the nature of the research questions, and the intellectual puzzle or curiosity that the proposal had to suggest. I pushed and prodded them to question their intellectual assumptions, and to develop some critical distance from their understanding of their proposed study or research unit of analysis. Shifts in their thinking were never imposed. They were always the outcome of the serendipity embedded in ongoing conversations in which the views held by the students and their ability to recognise and adjust their thinking were affirmed and valued. While I always engaged, at times robustly, with their conceptual approaches, our relations were always based on affirming their capacity and autonomy in deciding on the type of study they wanted to propose.

In the interviews they spoke about the role played by the wide and in-depth reading I expected them to do in getting them to see their possible research from novel or more rigorous conceptual angles. According to both students lending them my own books played an important role in generating trust in the process. I was also able to provide a conduit for access to bursaries to both students, who, as businessmen, needed financial support to enable them to take the leap into near full-time study. I involved both students in aspects of the work of the Faculty of Education. I invited them to participate in staff seminars and later on asked them to do part-time contract lecturing. James felt very affirmed when I asked him to participate in a 'theorising' day I organised for academic staff, while Faheem appreciated my confidence in him for asking him to co-lecture one of my 4th year classes with me on campus and to lecture the same course alone at one of our Faculty's remote campuses. According to them, these academic induction opportunities provided them with crucial identity markers as academics or scholars in the making. It shifted their self-image to now firmly begin to incorporate elements of a scholarly identity, which is crucial in PhD completion. Acquiring a scholarly identity through visible scholarly markers, I would argue, is a key requirement for PhD study.

When I asked in the interview whether they could recall any difficult moment in the supervision process they offered one example each. Faheem felt that I at one point did not see or 'perhaps forgot what the focus of the proposal was'. I had made some challenging comments about his work and had introduced two examples of successfully completed theses as a way of exposing him to different types of studies. Faheem interpreted this to mean

that I wanted him to shift focus, something he was loathe to do, and that I perhaps did not quite understand what he wanted to propose. The issue was resolved when we spoke about my intention in giving him the theses as examples of emulatable studies. James experienced a difficult moment when I, according to him, brutally confronted him about not delivering work for a long period. Turning the confrontation inward, James reacted by blaming himself for this situation, vowed to work harder, and then proceeded prolifically to produce a smart piece of written work shortly thereafter. These two incidents notwithstanding, the rest of the proposal development relationship was relatively productive and conflict-free.

As I have suggested earlier, James's and Faheem's individual approaches to the PhD were personally divergent, which issued into some relational differentiation on my part. Faheem was interested in establishing a relationship based on a high level of scholarly integrity. As an ideas person he wanted to be challenged academically. While not unaware of or even averse to engaging with the personal dimensions of the relationship, his primary expectation was for a supervisory process that could provide a stimulating intellectual experience. James, on the other hand, was more concerned with establishing a relationship based on personal synergy. The relationship would have to take account of his personal and emotional demeanour, and particularly the impact this dimension would have on his approach to his doctoral work. Thus, while my relationship with Faheem had been mediated by the academic quality and expertise I could muster in the supervisory process, with James the primary emphasis had been on establishing synergy with his personal emotional approach to the doctoral study. Neither relationship, however, was unaffected by the other dimension; the one element simply seemed more primary than the other. I asked myself early on though whether Faheem could or would learn from me, given the way in which he held his ideas, and his high expectations for academic stimulation. My apprehension was laid to rest in the context of our academic conversations during the process. James's statement in the interview that 'I realised that I can learn from you' points to the comfortable personal and intellectual synergy we struck during the process.

Proposal supervision as 'shared repertoire development'

The doctoral proposal can be viewed as an artefact of the proposal development process that gets adjudicated by the academy in order to determine whether the student has suggested a coherent and plausible doctoral study. As artefact, the proposal has to display whether the student has been able to identify a research focus rooted within a gap in the extant literature on the subject, a set of sharp analytical questions framed by the conceptual literature, and a research methodology that is congruent with the study's main questions. Coherence among these elements is essential. A proposal has to indicate whether the study is rigorously framed and whether it addresses an interesting intellectual issue or puzzle worthy of research scrutiny. The supervisory process is primarily aimed at guiding the student from her initial focus and approach to the potential study to an elegant statement of the main elements required by the proposal.

The proposal supervision process can be likened to a situated practice in which shared repertoire development takes place. That is, wherein the student comes to learn or acquire the rudimentary skills and conceptual clarity and capacity necessary for writing a coherent proposal. The supervisor facilitates such repertoire development by engaging with the student's intellectual approach to the proposal. While supervising my two students I had come to understand how the relational dynamics embedded in the process interact with and shape the proposal's intellectual form. Facilitating a shift from the initial views they held about their study to an appropriate academic focus was closely tied to engaging with their normative self-constructions. I have had to understand how their personal identities impacted on the way they initially framed their approach to the doctoral study. Facilitating a shift in their self-construction was required in order for them to develop an academically acceptable proposal. I would argue that the embedded practices in the situated context of the supervisory process facilitated this comportment shift.

James's and Faheem's initial approaches to the doctoral study were closely tied to their personal identities. Faheem initially favoured a classroom Action Research type of study. Similar to his MEd study, he wanted to design, implement and research a classroom innovation programme that he thought would facilitate learning improvement. He was interested in understanding, through the study, whether and how such a programme might be taken up

by his learners. He was motivated by the desire to empower learners through the application of a critical and innovative pedagogy. Faheem's study was based on what I thought were his firmly held ideas about change. It sounded like he knew exactly what he wanted to do, and that he was about to do it without much reflection on his own assumptions about the nature of change in the area of teaching and learning. I steered our early conversations in the direction of questioning the way in which a strong emancipatory thrust might prevent him from developing a complex understanding of change. I began to engage him on the confounding nature of social change in a transforming country and that there had not yet emerged any solid cognitive maps or coordinates to help us understand change. I impressed on him the need to be reflexive about his assumptions. I suggested that his strong normative views could be regarded as judgemental and I silently questioned whether Faheem would be able to do a doctoral study without the required distancing from his own understanding of the world. My view of Faheem early on in the supervisory process was that he required a fundamental shift in his approach to doctoral study. I thought he had to suspend, or at least develop a critical distance from, his own normative views. But I also became very aware that the relational basis for engaging him in such a shift would have to be intellectually substantial. He was not about to change his perspective on his doctoral studies on the basis of superficial conversations with a young supervisor.

Fresh from his work on the development and learning programme, armed with data from a baseline survey he had designed and completed about the impact of the programme, James's initial approach was informed by wanting to understand the impact of his two-year programme. He was keen to find use for his data in the doctoral study. He wanted to understand whether and how the input dimensions of the programme impacted on the adult learners, whether it enabled them to acquire skills that would help them find work and whether it, as he put it, could 'bring food to the table'. James thus initially suggested a type of impact evaluation study with quantitative and qualitative dimensions. With Dirk as my fellow supervisor also playing an active role, our initial approach was to encourage him to pursue this study. As supervisors we were excited about the data he had already acquired, and we thought that it could serve as a solid basis for the study. I was personally sceptical about the way in which James spoke about the impact of the programme. I had a nagging feeling that the nature of impact

might be much more complex than James was suggesting, that a two-year intervention programme that combined elements of work and learning aimed at individuals who eked out a living on the coast might not have the desired impact. I thought that life in these marginal communities might ‘take up’ these trained individuals in much more complex ways than their finding work might suggest. I began to engage with James on conceptualising the complex nature of impact in marginal communities. My intention was not to suggest another study. On the contrary, I thought I was helping James to develop conceptual and explanatory depth to the baseline evaluative data he already had of the programme.

While we thought his study of impact was plausible, we engaged James on the nature of the questions he wanted to pose and the appropriate methods for the study. I, in particular, questioned whether an understanding of impact that is limited to measuring learning input and achievement would provide much of an understanding about the complex ways the programme impacted on the lives of the adult learners. James found my continuous prompting about ‘what the type of story is you wanted to tell’ unsettling and challenging. He began to take on the view that his study ‘was much too simplistically framed’ and ‘that I had to respond to your question much more profoundly’.

My intellectual interaction with the two students was informed by the intention of getting them to understand what I regarded as the social complexity that characterised contemporary South Africa. I believed that both students initially viewed their study one-dimensionally, in terms of which they regarded successful progress and change as the outcome of activist-driven programmatic intervention. This approach, I believed, eschews an understanding of the intricacies involved in change in especially the type of marginal and impoverished contexts in which they proposed to do their research.

On reflection, I have to admit that my approach to my own research may have influenced my interaction with them. I had recently adopted interpretive lenses to inform three qualitative studies I did about educational discourse and identity. In one of these studies I reflected on how my critical theory lenses became inadequate in trying to understand what I was observing during the research. I had realised that I was carrying my own normative assumptions of the research unit much too strongly, and that I

had to suspend my judgment, although not entirely, and adopt a *verstehen* approach that allowed me to study the intentionality of the human activity I was observing. The interpretive approach enabled me to understand the complex bases upon which human choices were being made and their creativity in adapting to a transforming discursive and material environment (see Fataar 2005).

I wanted James and Faheem to understand that the doctoral study that I was prepared to supervise had to help lay some 'logical interpretive order' onto the unfolding social world. I believed James's and Faheem's study of impact and educational change respectively underestimated the nature and depth of social reconfiguration. Realising early on that their initial understandings were tied to their normative identities, I began to lay a platform to engage with sensitivity with their knowledge dimensions of their proposals.

They both read widely throughout the proposal development process. They understood that a key feature of repertoire development required extensive reading of contextual and theoretical literature. The supervisory meetings were largely used to discuss their readings and written pieces in relation to their proposed study. The ways in which their reading was marshalled in the supervisory interaction took on slightly different nuances for each of the students. James was interested in understanding how he could develop a scholarly focus for his study of the adult learning programme. He thus read more narrowly around the need to develop an adequate conceptual approach. He became animated by the work of Touraine, introduced to him while doing a postgraduate reading course at another university. Touraine's views began to resonate with some of the comments I made about the sociological complexity of a changing environment (see Touraine 2000). James became persuaded that a study on impact required nuance and sophistication.

Faheem's attitude to reading was coupled with his search for an area of study. His voracious reading and conversation about it with me eventually led to him shifting away from a study on pedagogy and change. Noticing his appetite for reading, I gave him a considerable number of books and articles to read on issues of culture, pedagogy, identity and policy. I had intended for him to become familiar with the latest literature on change in South Africa, especially the application of new analytical approaches and methodological techniques. Faheem took to the key ideas of these readings with keenness and sophistication. He came to understand that studies on identity and culture

focus on providing understanding about the basis upon which communities and individuals reflexively adapt to a changing environment. As a deeply cultural person he found work on identity and culture fascinating. In his own words: 'It opened up a new world of understanding.' I prodded him to start making links between schooling, culture and identity, especially to consider the mediated ways in which teachers adapted to change in difficult circumstances. Faheem gradually became fascinated by the idea of a study on teacher identity in the light of becoming persuaded that studying classroom pedagogy from an Action Research perspective with a strong view about the nature of change might not be appropriate.

Having taken time to establish a comfortable interactive relationship with each of the students, I began to engage much more firmly with them around identifying the parameters of their actual study. With James I began to discuss themes around the Sociology of Education, impressing on him the need to take analytical account of the relationship between educational change and social formation, that an adult education initiative had to be seen in a broader context. I helped him to identify, by using a spatial metaphor, how his analysis could be framed sociologically. James began to see his study as potentially being framed by macro policy discourse, which impacted on the meso level of programme implementation. He took on board the idea that the 'heart of the study' would be at the micro level of individual identities.

It was, however, discussions about the application of Touraine's framework that were incisive in getting James to decide what the focus of his study would be. Touraine (2000, 34-56) uses the concept 'demodernisation' to refer to the intractable material and symbolic conditions under which people in the late industrial age survive. Touraine theorises about the reflexive basis upon which humans retain their humanity. What appealed to James were Touraine's views on how humans 'become subjects'. The notion of 'becoming' pointed to the ways he could uncover how these adult learners retained their reflexivity in apparently intractable circumstances. He took to the idea of studying the lives of learners by applying the notion of 'becoming a subject' as a way of understanding how a two-year learning programme may have contributed to their becoming empowered individuals. James thus shifted fundamentally from a policy focus on the impact of the programme, whether the programme has been successful in providing the learners with

employable skills, to a focus on their more complex shifting identities within their marginal life worlds.

James's shift to a study of identity was decisive. He dropped the quantitative methodological approach in favour of a qualitative ethnographic study of five adult participants. In answer to my prodding about the nature of the study, or the story that he wanted to tell, James proposed a study about the complex, negotiated and shifting worlds of five participants who completed the adult learning programme. He became interested in understanding the formative worlds of these people before they entered the programme, how they understood and took up the policy intentionality of the actual programme, and how their constructions of self impacted on the quality of their lives after the programme. He was no longer interested in the generalisability that a quantitative study might have provided, instead preferring to refer to his ethnographic study as having 'relatability' value, i.e. that other education intervention programmes could find some resonance in the story he was about to tell.

Faheem's proposal is located in the broad area of HIV/Aids education, which is part of a university-wide inter-faculty programme on studying the dynamics of building a better society. While he intended to do a study on HIV/Aids and education when selected for the programme, it was only during the course of the supervisory process that he decided on a topic. Given his newfound fascination with teacher identity, Faheem proceeded to write a proposal around the sexual identities of Muslim teachers. This topic combined his cultural interests in Muslim society with his role as a teacher. He was however very careful not to suggest that Muslims held different normative positions about sexuality. He took care in developing a study that struck a conceptual balance between the common sexual discourses of all teachers and their peculiar expression by one religious group. He held tenaciously to this conceptual approach and I played the role of helping him to set up the study conceptually and methodologically. Faheem proposed a sophisticated study that combines a specific conceptual framework that is capable of analysing heterogeneity and difference in teacher identity on the one hand and a methodological approach that compares the sexual identities of teachers broadly with that of Muslim teachers specifically.

Both James and Faheem have shifted their studies to an analysis of identity formation in a transforming context. They have thus moved decisively

away from their initial approaches to doctoral work, which were facilitated by repertoire development dynamics inside the supervision process. My role as supervisor was incisive in facilitating a process that combined their intellectual development with relational and personal dynamics that made such a shift possible. Both students have come to understand that doctoral study requires taking on board an academic identity that enables them to pose scholarly questions and to write a proposal that, as an artefact, signals the readiness of the students to become full participants in the doctoral writing community of practice.

Conclusion

The situated practice of supervising doctoral proposals has to take into account the ways in which the relational dynamics between supervisor and students interact with the intellectual approach to their study. As I have shown above, successful supervision must be responsive specifically to how the student's personal dynamics have shaped her approach to PhD study. At stake for me personally was to be aware of the personal and intellectual basis on which I had to negotiate my authority as the supervisor. I have had to pay attention to establishing my role as a supervisor, primarily on the basis of my intellectual expertise, which could not be assumed or taken for granted. What informed my authoritative interaction with my two students was my willingness to understand the specific ways in which they came to the proposal process, displaying awareness of their personal and intellectual requirements, and facilitating their immersion into the necessary academic and intellectual repertoires required for proposal writing. A constructive conversational climate was established on the basis of respect and trust. Our conversations were mutually affirming, comfortable and carefully directed to discussing the intellectual parameters of their study. I was able to be forthright when I thought it necessary to push them into definitive intellectual directions, possibly influencing them to tie their studies closer to my own interests. Overall, supervision of their doctoral proposal was successful in large part because of their ability to incorporate elements of a scholarly identity, which enabled them to ask appropriate academic questions. My role in the supervision process was to facilitate such a shift. In the process, I was able to develop my own personal and professional reflexivity about the complex ways of mediating my own authority as a PhD supervisor.

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Education, responsibility and democratic justice: Cultivating friendship to alleviate some of the injustices on the African continent

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Abstract

With the demise of apartheid education in South Africa, a new outcomes-based education system was ushered in which challenged educators and students to move beyond instrumental thinking – that way of thinking which prioritises narrow considerations focused on the technicist ends of education. There is widespread recognition amongst educators that outcomes-based education (OBE) can prevent instrumental thinking, particularly in view of OBE's agenda to encourage critical learning. However, what many university educators do not necessarily take into account is that many students are not always ready to deal with critical learning because of the apparent persistence of instrumental thinking at some universities in South Africa – my institution is no exception. Simply put, many students seem to be quite willing to be taught about some of the ends of education, rather than the reasons behind these ends. With this idea of desired student learning in mind, I argue that it has become necessary to fulfil the promise of democratic justice on the African continent through educating for friendship, rather than perpetuating uncritical modes of learning, which could further extend the violation of human dignity on the African continent.

Reflecting on several moments in my classroom pedagogy and conversations with colleagues at different universities, I firstly argue that critical learning cannot be blind to prescriptiveness, since students (in this case postgraduate students about to qualify professionally as school teachers) have to be made attentive in some way to the public realm of a democratic post-apartheid South Africa and post-colonial Africa. In short, they have to be taught what it means to be democratically just. Thereafter, I argue that teaching students about democratic justice can entail critical learning and, hence, be non-

instrumental, provided that university educators become more responsible educators. Finally, I examine how actions (non-indoctrination, impartiality and deliberation achieved through respect and friendship) can potentially fulfil the democratic justice project, the success of which is so desperately needed on the African content.

Critical learning and democratic justice

I once asked my students to identify some of the main arguments in a text given to them in advance. One of them remarked: 'You did not ask us to read the text.' By implication some students only read texts about the subject being taught (in this instance, philosophy of education) if the educator tells them to do so. The point I am making is that if some students are not told what to do, learning does not necessarily occur. Of course, this does not mean that learning takes place only on reading a text. One can read a text without understanding and therefore not learn. However, the possibility of learning is enhanced when reading takes place, because one has to analyse and critically scrutinise the text, that is, construct or deconstruct meanings in order to make sure that learning has some chance of being realised. So, prescribing to students that they should read particular texts can make learning possible, even if those texts might reflect some partial understanding of events in the world. For instance, reading texts which promote the marketisation of education would at least enable students to begin to connect with some of the effects of marketisation on education, and then consider whether such an approach to education is plausible. Put differently, the possibility of learning is enhanced when students are at times prescribed *what* to read. This is different from telling them how texts ought to be read – a matter of interpreting for students beforehand some of the messages that lie in and outside of the prescribed texts.

This brings me to the question: does prescribing texts which advance a case for democratic justice to be achieved through education necessarily engender learning, more specifically critical learning? In the first place, critical learning takes place when students construct meanings that reflect their interpretations and judgements of particular texts – they have critically scrutinised the texts. In turn, by giving to others a justifiable account of their judgements and at the same time considering the judgements of others in an attempt either to modify or adjust their own judgements, students are said

to learn. By implication, students learn not when they make contact with texts, that is, read them, but when they can offer a justifiable account of their understanding of the texts to others. In turn, students can reject, accept or modify their own judgements based on engagement with the plausible judgements of others. When such an evaluation of judgements takes place, students learn. So what is it about democratic justice students ought to learn, in order for their learning to be more critical?

Amy Gutmann (2003) gives a compelling account of democratic justice which can make learning more critical. For Gutmann (2003: 26-27) democratic justice involves three interrelated aspects: the capacity to live one's own life as one sees fit consistent with respecting equal freedoms of others – 'to treat all individuals as equal agents'; the capacity to contribute to the justice of one's society and one's world; and the capacity of individuals to live a decent life with a fair chance to choose among their preferred ways of living. Firstly, if one learns to respect the liberties of others as being equally as important as one's own, then one recognises that others have similar freedoms to live their lives according to what they see fit. So, when South African students are taught to respect the freedoms of other students (say from their neighbouring countries or from communities that are different from their own), they do not become agitated when others present points of view perhaps different from theirs – they respect the views of others. However, this does not mean that they necessarily agree with everything others have to say. They also have the right to question, undermine and refute the judgements of others. At least the possibility of learning is there when students begin to critically scrutinise one another's views in an atmosphere of mutual respect for one another's different or at times conflicting judgements. When students respect one another equally, they are said to be critical, because criticality demands that we give due consideration to the views of others. A group of students once came to me to express their inability to grasp some of the key concepts in philosophy of education. When I told the other students about this in the classroom, they became agitated with the group (not necessarily homogenous in terms of race and culture), because they claimed that these students had no legitimate grounds to claim ignorance of the subject. I felt the majority of students were wrong to be dismissive of the group, because one aspect of critical learning is that we begin to connect with students who might encounter some difficulty in getting to understand aspects of the course. In this regard, equally respecting the rights of others in order to

gain some understanding of what appear to be difficult concepts to grasp amounts to recognising that others have a legitimate voice that needs to be heard. Only then would the possibility of critical learning be enhanced. In this way, learning to recognise different and often conflicting judgements of others seems to be a way in which to maximise critical learning. This is so because critical learning has some connection with considering the merit of the conflicting views of others – that is, whether these views make sense, what MacIntyre (1990) refers to as taking others' views into 'systematic controversy'.

Secondly, to learn how to contribute to the justice of one's society and the world has some connection with critical learning. I remember a student who remarked that living in poverty is a choice which some people prefer to exercise. (This student specifically referred to the majority of blacks who live in squalor and abject poverty in informal settlements, better known as squatter camps in South Africa.) If the student means that some people are poor and therefore have little choice to determine where they live, then I agree with him. And, if he means (and I presume this is the case) that some people are poor and cannot afford to improve their living conditions, I also agree. But if he means that we should not be doing something (whether through protests or other means) about improving their precarious living conditions, then I disagree. In other words, one cannot claim to be a critical learner if one's learning does not result in some form of action that can potentially contribute towards the achievement of democratic justice. I cannot imagine how students could be critical if their learning does not cause them to act anew – they need to act with a sense of justice to others. Likewise, students cannot be critical if their learning does not contribute towards them advocating for a just world – for instance, the reduction of extreme and unacceptable levels of poverty on the African continent. This does not mean that they merely call for recognition and respect of others' rights (whether civil, political and social) within a critical learning agenda. Instead, they also stress the importance of taking responsibility for the rights of others – a matter of taking others' rights seriously or 'accepting appropriate responsibility for the rights of others, not just making a fuss about our own' (Callan 1997: 73). For instance, people who champion the right to employment in South Africa also consider as important the cause of others to take responsibility to meet the needs of those who are jobless. Such an understanding justice could potentially extend the mere recognition of,

and respect for, others' rights to a position whereby we assume appropriate responsibility for the rights of others.

Thirdly, to learn what it means to be decent or civil (to be democratically just) has some connection to being critical. To show civility involves demonstrating what Stephen Macedo (1990) refers to as a sense of 'public-spiritedness' – that is, demonstrating a conscious awareness of others and recognising that they have to be respected on account of their difference. In South African university classrooms there are students from various cultural backgrounds and when these students demonstrate civility they connect with one another's stories. They are acutely aware of one another's differences and through their 'public-spiritedness' collectively share the stories of their lives. That is, they are critical. However, encountering one another's differences does not mean that one merely listens to what others have to say without subjecting their truth claims to critical scrutiny. These students also question one another's stories with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the texts of their lived experiences. I recall one student in my philosophy of education class who questioned another student's bias towards Muslims in general. One student claimed that Muslims are bigots, whereas another student disagreed with this view on the basis that she lived in a Muslim country and her experience was that Muslims are generally moderate and respectful towards others (like herself) who have different cultural backgrounds. The point I am making is that questioning and undermining the views of others does not necessarily mean that one is disrespectful towards others. Rather, critically questioning people's unjustifiable assumptions about others is to treat them with honour, that is, not considering the unjustifiable views of others as 'beyond the pale of critical judgement' (Fay 1996). In this way, one demonstrates a sense of decency (civility) – one is democratically just and therefore critical.

In essence, when students learn about democratic justice, they learn to recognise equally the freedoms of others, to contribute towards private and public justice, and to be decent. In this way, they learn to be critical because criticality is linked to the realisation of a democratically just society on the grounds of having been exposed beforehand to texts which may enhance the possibility of achieving democratic justice. Yet critical learning cannot take place in university classrooms without responsible educators. It is to a consideration of this issue that I now turn.

Responsible teaching and critical learning

In the first instance, for students to be critical they should demonstrate both the ability to reason and the disposition to do so (Bailin and Siegel 2003: 182). Having the ability to reason involves first ‘having the ability to ascertain the goodness of candidate reasons’ – the ‘ability to assess the probable strength of reason’ (ibid.). If one cannot determine the ‘probative strength of relevant reasons’ (ibid.), one lacks the ability to be critical. Having the ability to determine the ‘probative strength of relevant reasons’ is insufficient if one does not have the disposition to effect one’s ability to be critical – this means one has to value good reasoning and to guide one’s actions on the basis of such assessment (Bailin and Siegel 2003: 183). For instance, one demonstrates a disposition to be critical if one openly and fairly evaluates the reasons of others, at the same time showing respect for others’ points of view.

What follows from this is that, if educators want to foster in students the ability to be critical as well as cultivate their dispositions in such a way that they value good reasons, then they (educators) need to pay some attention to what it means to be responsible. A responsible educator treats her students in a democratically just manner. This involves, firstly, teaching them without indoctrination; secondly, teaching them to act impartially; thirdly, teaching them to act deliberatively; and fourthly, teaching them to be friendly.

Firstly, when I teach students I do so with the understanding that they become susceptible to rationality – that is, they always look for a justification of particular claims. They do not consider claims as absolutely and uniquely valid, and recognise that these claims can be altered on the grounds of more justifiable evidence. Teaching for non-indoctrination does not merely involve the justification of arguments in a university class setting, but also opening up the social world of students to what is other and different – for instance, encouraging students to establish new friendships and unrestricting their access to texts which one might consider as scientifically, philosophically and imaginatively subversive (Morgan 2005: 369). Through non-indoctrination, students learn to become critical and their openness towards democratic justice also increases.

Secondly, educators need to teach students what Hannah Arendt (1977) refers to as taking responsibility for the world – that is, teaching them to prevent wars, conflict and other forms of violence such as bullying and the domestic

abuse of women and children, and always to establish opportunities for peaceful co-existence among different people. This means that educators need to teach students to act impartially – that is, to make one's understanding of the world and events that occur in it known to others without any form of bias. And when educators do this, they do not conceive of themselves as merely possessing techno-scientific knowledge which they have to convey to students to mould their minds in some predetermined way, as if they are implementing a mechanical pedagogical programme. Rather, they engage students to encourage them to make judgements in an open, autonomous and critical way – this is a matter of constantly disrupting the tendency to think of themselves as projects moving towards completion (O'Byrne 2005: 406). Only then can the possibility of students learning critically about democratic justice projects become highly likely.

Thirdly, when educators teach students to act deliberatively they are in fact educating them to be respectful. Why? In the first place, to be respectful one does not merely have the ability to listen and respond critically to what others have to say, but is also *able* to respect others as worthy of human beings and to recognise that others have the capability to reciprocate respect (Nussbaum 2000: 79). What is it about 'respect for persons' that can engender defensible deliberations and subsequently establish conditions favourable for democratic justice? In the first instance, during deliberations every participant wants to be recognised as someone with the same basic moral worth as any other participant – that is, as a person who has something to say and wants to be heard. In other words, through deliberation people want to be seen as co-participants who share the authority to determine how the deliberation ought to unfold. This then not only requires participants in the deliberation to be prepared and willing to listen to what somebody else has to say, but also to be respected for her worth – for the contribution she can potentially make to the deliberation, that is, for her 'ableness' to contribute. And this is where apartheid victims and perpetrators of such heinous crimes against human dignity both began to recognise one another's capabilities ('ablenesses') to work towards reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. By far the majority of the parties knew that only through their capabilities to forgive could the country move closer towards reconciliation in a new democratic compensation. In another way, both parties (victims and perpetrators) needed to respect one another as being capable of new beginnings – that is, of pursuing new deliberative pathways. In this regard,

it is apposite to refer to Weale (1985: 28), who notes three aspects of respect: 'The first is that persons have goals and purposes in their lives that are meaningful to them (they can contribute meaningfully to a deliberation). The second is that persons are capable of reflecting upon their circumstances and act on reasons that derive from these reflections. The third is that the goals that give meaning to people's lives are the product of their self-reflection, so that their goals are in part self-chosen and derive a portion of their value from that fact. Respect for persons therefore involves the claim that persons should be allowed to act on their own conception of what is good and valuable for them, and that in so far as they are doing this they are expressing their natures as rational and reflective beings. The point is that, when people engage in a deliberation, they show respect for one another when they allow one another to express themselves rationally – they are permitted to articulate meanings. In other words, as co-participants they respect one another as equals; this respect implies that each person recognises others as *capable* and competent to articulate what they have in mind – in South Africa by far the majority of perpetrators and victims of apartheid crimes did not choose the path of hatred, antagonism and hostility, but rather agreed to respect the compromises of their deliberations, that is to say, to forgive and never to repeat the horrific, inhumane acts of the apartheid past. The upshot of this is that people show respect for one another when they consider their judgements to have value, because these judgements are the expressions of how people have chosen to make sense of and respond to others – to make others know what they think and reflect on. And this can only be done if deliberations ensue between people who are different and even in conflict, with the aim to reach a shared compromise such as happened at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings during the 1990s.

The point about respecting people in a deliberation is that every human being should be considered by another as a source of value. This not only means that people have something to say but, more importantly (as pointed out by Hill (2000)) that, firstly, persons are *capable* of reflecting on their desires, setting their own ends and rationally pursuing some means to an end, by allowing them space and opportunity and even aiding them in their pursuit to some extent, provided their means and ends are compatible with due respect to others. Secondly, people respect others as moral agents when they recognise others as reciprocating the moral standing that has been imputed to them, that is, they recognise that others should not be 'written off' as

creatures who can respond only to power, bribery and manipulation. Thirdly, respect for people involves considering them as particular individuals, whose identity is bound up with particular projects, personal attachments and traditions. Fourthly, to respect is also to criticise, if necessary. And fifthly, to respect means to appreciate the different values others have found in their groups (Hill 2000: 77-80). Thus, in a deliberation, if people are not recognised for having something worthwhile to say (that is, for being rational), being excluded on account of their difference, and allowed to get away with unsubstantiated claims without being criticised or taken into systematic controversy, 'respect for persons' would no longer prevail and by implication the deliberation will be short-lived.

Fourthly, to act responsibly one also needs to engender friendship through one's (inter)actions – the idea of 'doing things together', that is, a kind of mutuality whereby one engages another and is engaged in return (Sherman 1997: 193). For Sherman (1997: 204) mutuality can be captured in Aristotelian phrases such as 'spending days together', 'spending time together', 'living together', 'acquiring experience of one another and becoming familiar with each other's habits', as well as in more transient interactions such as a great conversation, knowing glances, a moment of shared repartee that lasts no longer than an instant, yet captures in that moment the magic of a special connection. For me, such a notion of friendship, which requires time and familiarity with each other's characters on the basis of doing things *with* each other, cannot be separated from the relationship that ought to exist between a university teacher and her students. Why? Teaching and learning are not separate and mutually exclusive activities that occur independently of each other. They are mutually integrated – without teaching there can be no learning, and without learning, teaching plays no role. So, teaching and learning are constituent practices of co-operative, shared human activity that, like friendship, rely on time and familiarity. For the reason that teaching, learning and friendship seem to have mutual engagement in common it would not be unwise to look at some of the constitutive meanings of friendship as espoused by Sherman in order to establish more possibilities for improving teaching and learning.

Friendship and critical learning

Sherman's articulation of mutual engagement or friendship is underscored by three interrelated ideas: mutual attachment, mutual attunement and mutual action. First, to be mutually attached to a person (to be a friend) is to offer love and concern to that person, and upon separation or loss to feel grief and mourning. Put differently, friendship involves a willingness on the part of one to give priority to another in terms of resources and time (Sherman 1997: 199-200). For example, a teacher can be considered a friend of a student if she attends the student's deceased mother's funeral and in turn allows the student to catch up with work missed during formal lectures on account of the student's absence from class. In turn, the student reciprocates attachment by committing herself to catch up with her studies and also to make the teacher know that his joy or grief in different situations matters to her (the student) too. The idea of becoming mutually attached to one another is to lay the groundwork for people (in this instance teachers and students) to shape themselves (in order to strengthen and stabilise feelings of trust, goodwill and mutual benefit) in terms of the characteristics they approve, by correcting one another, and by 'learning from the strengths and wisdom of another' (Sherman 1997: 206-207). It is this idea of correcting one another and learning from each other in an atmosphere of trust, goodwill and mutual benefit that holds much promise in reshaping teaching and learning beyond indoctrination and rote.

How can correcting one another and learning from one another's strengths and wisdom help us to transcend rote learning and, in particular, less critical forms of education? The consideration that people can learn from one another and similarly correct one another seems to be premised on the idea that people have the trust and goodwill to want to discover things by mutual engagement – as friends. By implication what students or teachers might say would be considered with interest and appreciation. In this way the prospect exists for teachers and students to learn from one another – they become responsive to one another. This kind of responsiveness (friendship) on the part of teachers and students creates opportunities for both parties to attend to one another, to experience one another (Zembylas 2005: 152). And when teachers and students hear and respond to one another they invariably learn from one another and in turn become reasonably critical of one another, that is to say they now have the mindset to correct one another for purposes of

intellectual and emotional growth. At the same time, as friends, teachers also create possibilities for students to bring into question existing understandings and to produce meanings perhaps not thought of before. In this way, less critical education could possibly be undermined.

Second, friends are attuned to each other if they can relax their boundaries and be stimulated by one another so that 'with another mind we (they) can think and act more effectively' (Sherman 1997: 208). By relaxing one's boundaries a person (friend) wants to see himself with greater accuracy, flaws and all – that is, to be attuned to one another is to embark on a sort of 'practical reflection' (Sherman 1997: 212). In a different way, mutual attunement involves people being interested in coming to know themselves and learning to assess through argument and thought whether their actions and emotions are indeed fine (*ibid.*). This idea of coming to know oneself through argument and thought has the potential to undermine the 'mastery of texts' approach, which seems to dominate university education in South Africa.

How can this idea of coming to know oneself through argument and thought as well as to stimulate one another help us to move beyond treating texts in a canonical way? On the one hand, engaging carefully through argument and thought involves advancing inquiry from within a particular point of view, preserving and transforming the initial agreements with those who share the point of view. On the other hand, stimulating one another involves entering into controversy with other rival standpoints by both exhibiting what is mistaken in a rival standpoint in the light of one's understanding, and conceiving and reconceiving one's own point of view against the strongest possible objections to them offered by one's opponents. By implication, coming to know oneself through argument and thought firstly demands that a text be read in a way whereby one sets out the range of possible interpretations of the text and identifies and evaluates the presuppositions of this or that particular argument in the text. Secondly, a text should be read in a way whereby the reader is put to question by the text as much as the text by the reader, that is to say to engage in systematic controversy. And the importance of reading a text in this way is that the outcome of one's reading is not the final (conclusive) answer, but rather a reasonable (interpretive) judgement that itself must be subjected to critical scrutiny by others who engage in similar intellectual debate free from the imperatives of constrained or unconstrained agreement. In this way, university teachers are

friendly – they care enough about students ‘to regard alternative positions without a rush to judgment ... (that is) they appreciate fully the views of others (students) or care enough about others to exert the effort necessary to hear and comprehend what they are saying’ (Burbules 1993, 4). In this way, teachers stimulate their students and at the same time thoughtfully expand their self-knowledge through deliberative argumentation with students. Consequently, the possibility of reading texts in a fashion that aims for mastery would be far removed from both teachers’ and students’ inclinations – they act as friends who engage in deliberative inquiry.

Third, to act mutually is to do so with zest and energy that which enables us to ‘keep our activity (in this case, education) alive and continuous, in a way that we find pleasant’ (Sherman 1997: 213). More aptly, Sherman (1997: 213-214) posits

Friends keep us active and alive, not like some vitamin pill we might pop but, more often, by stimulating new interests and ends, and by introducing us to new activities that bear the mark and value of their transmission ... They fuel us with ideas and possibilities that were not on the horizon before. The activities ‘actualise’ us; they don’t merely keep us active.

I shall now show how mutual action through friendship can help us to think of education beyond conclusive outcomes – an activity that can fuel us with ideas and possibilities in an inconclusive way, one in which we can gain much pleasure. Much about cultivating friendship revolves around stimulating what are ‘new’ activities in terms of interests, ends and possibilities. Predetermined outcomes might be considered as ‘new’ for students, but once these outcomes are known they are no longer other and different – that is, new and unknowable. So, how can friendship help us to think beyond what might become known after some level of exploration? As has been mentioned earlier, friendship is an active, continuous activity of mutual engagement, which means that once students have achieved the outcomes and internalised them, this activity should not be seen as one whereby finality and conclusiveness have been attained, for that would defeat the purposes of education and for that matter friendship. So, if the outcomes (once achieved by students) are considered as new beginnings that can further establish possibilities for new and different encounters, then the attainable outcomes can no longer be considered as conclusive. The point I am making is that the outcomes are not ends in themselves but represent,

rather, windows for other unknowable educative encounters that we might still experience. For this reason Karl Popper's fallibility thesis seems to be apposite towards cultivating an education system where the outcomes would always be inconclusive and where there always remains more to learn. For Popper, learning (in this instance, outcomes) is not a passive reception of information, but derives rather as a result of 'active attempts to solve problems by trial and error' (Berkson and Wetterson 1984: 6). For Popper, 'problems' refer to experiences of something contrary to our expectations and the upsetting or disappointing of our expectations initiates the process of trial and error. Trials, then, are attempts to correct our expectations so that they might be consistent with the surprising or unknowable event, and an error is an attempt that indicates a failure to account for both the surprising event and our past experiences (Berkson and Wetterson 1984: 7). So, if outcomes can be considered as experiences gained through learning that might be contrary to our expectations, then we need to set a process of trial and error in motion, which would enable us to revise or adjust our views in order to come closer to an unknowable event. And, once knowable, this learning experience (as outcomes are referred to) becomes another problem to be corrected consistent with something else unknowable or surprising. In this way, outcomes are never conclusive but are always learning experiences that can be further improved on (what Popper refers to as reconstruction) to encounter what is other and unknowable through trial and error – to reach a new stage in the evolution of our experience (Popper in Berkson and Wetterson 1984: 8). The point I am making is that outcomes can never be conclusive, for that would mark the end of education. Instead, outcomes ought to be treated as momentary learning experiences that should invariably be built on through trial and error (that is, through correction of mistakes) and on the basis of which new experiences not thought of before could ensue – a practice that cultivates students' sense of inventiveness to reach out for unexpected possibilities.

This brings me to a discussion of how a pedagogy of friendship can contribute towards achieving democratic justice on the African continent.

Cultivating friendship: A pedagogical pathway to alleviating injustices on the African continent

Three major injustices are evident on the African continent that subvert human dignity, social/economic security and peaceful co-existence: religious fundamentalism, famine and political autocracy. Firstly, religious fundamentalism exercised on the part of Muslim and Christian extremists in parts of eastern Africa clearly threatens peaceful co-existence among people of diverse religions. The unacceptable levels of intolerance exercised by these religious groups in the name of their faith are evident in the form of mosque and church burnings, and the public slaying of people, which seriously cries out for the teaching of 'respect for persons' and friendship in both public educational institutions and privately at home. This means that Africa's culturally diverse societies should demand that their universities, schools and families make a concerted effort to understand and appreciate as far as they can those features of their different cultures that others cherish and deem as important for their particular identity (whether through their literature, histories and folklore). For instance, nowadays it is not uncommon to find Muslims, Christians and Jews in the same educational institution. And it would be an expression of respect and friendship if students and educators from these groups become informed (even through argument and debate) about one another's cultures. 'Respect is blind if uninformed about relevant values and the reasons they provide; and it inevitably remains uninformed if nothing shakes us from our habits of seeing everything exclusively from our primary cultures' perspective' (Hill 2000: 83). If we can learn through dialogical engagement about our cultural diversity and develop an appreciation of one another's cultures (even if we are perhaps not in agreement with some aspects of our or their cultures), then the potential for religious extremism could possibly be thwarted. Moreover, following Benhabib (2002: 162), friendship also requires that we take into account people's linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious commonalities. The idea of finding a civil space for the sharing of different people's commonalities is based on the understanding that people need to learn to live with the otherness of others whose ways of being may be deeply threatening to our own (Benhabib 2002: 130). And by creating a civil space of friendship whereby people can enact what they have in common and at the same time make public their competing narratives and significations, people might have a real opportunity to co-exist. In this way they would

establish not only a community of conversation and interdependence (that is, they share commonalities), but also one of disagreement (that is, they do not share commonalities) without disrespecting others' life-worlds (Benhabib 2002: 35, 41). Put differently, when people are engaged in a conversation underpinned by interdependence and disagreement, they engage in a friendly process with a collective identity – they share commonalities. And educating people to become democratically just citizens involves creating civil spaces whereby they can learn to share commonalities and to respect the differences of others – that is, a matter of cultivating friendship.

Secondly, in parts of northern Africa famine and hunger have risen to intolerable levels as a result of political exclusion. In the Darfur region it has even become extremely difficult for the United Nations to succeed in its project of alleviating the poverty and hunger of people because of unacceptable levels of resistance from those who are intent on seeing the demise of the people of this region. What private and public institutions ought to do is to educate people to confront their biases and to learn to curb their arrogant preconceptions about others whom they might hardly understand – that is, people need to be taught what it means to be open in confronting other cultures and to curb their moral arrogance; after all, no single group can claim with confidence that it possesses the best, or the most humane and just, moral system (Hill 2000: 83). Here I think specifically of majority groups (in northern parts of Africa) from perhaps the same culture who alienate other minority groups (say, from the Darfur region) – they hardly talk to one another. Some of these majority groups create the impression that others (in the Darfur) should be very grateful to live in northern Africa – an attitude which seems to be deeply dismissive of certain 'classes' of human beings and needs to be rejected. The point I am making is that we can only show respect and friendship when we curb our moral arrogance – that is, stop looking at ourselves, as some majority groups in Africa do, as more privileged than others (minorities).

Thirdly, political autocracies on the African continent persist despite the formation of the African Union and its New Economic Path to Africa's Development (NEPAD) project, which aims to foster a culture of democratic governance. More specifically, NEPAD holds that the socio-economic recovery of the African continent and development are impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance

(AU 2001: 17). This vision on the part of African leaders sounds noble and there is every justification for supporting such a view since peace, security, good governance, respect for human rights and sound economic management are pre-conditions for democracies to flourish. I want to support this view, since the hope of attaining international competitiveness, reintegration into the global economy, and capacity-building on the African continent cannot be achieved without consolidating democracy. But it is at the level of democratic discourse that NEPAD's biggest challenge lies. How do NEPAD partners sustain and cultivate spheres of communication and negotiation, which are not only central to the success of the alliance, but also necessary conditions to consolidate and enhance democratic discourse? It is not simply a matter of strengthening mechanisms for conflict resolution, promoting human rights and restoring and maintaining macro-economic stability. Rather, it is a matter of NEPAD partners taking seriously the constitutive principles of deliberative democracy, which can make it possible for their conversation to continue.

This brings me back to the claim made earlier that political dictatorships (in the presence of NEPAD) not only undermine the voices of the majority of people, but also exacerbate the already volatile climate of political instability and marginalisation of the vulnerable other. What our educational institutions ought to consolidate and advance is an appreciation born of listening to people. Only by listening to others subjected to political exclusion can political, economic and cultural instability be combated. In other words, teaching respect and friendship requires that we engender a culture of listening to many voices we might like or dislike and even deplore – that is, listening through active engagement with the aim of preventing any form of injustice. Here I agree with Amy Gutmann (2003: 158), who claims that respect for persons require that we not 'treat other people as if their lives were not worth living, a perspective that is antithetical to any plausible conception of democratic justice'.

Of course, my potential critic can legitimately claim that conditions for friendship are not conducive to the democratic justice project so desperately needed on the African continent. The question can be asked: how does one educate students to be democratically just, that is, to be non-doctrinaire, impartial and deliberative and friendly, if contexts are not favourable for learning these qualities? I think we need to start from the position of capability

advocated by Martha Nussbaum (2000). The question that needs to be asked is not whether 'response-ability' can be taught in less favourable contexts, but rather whether students are actually capable of being non-doctrinaire, impartial, deliberative and friendly despite the conditions. That is, considering the conditions which might hamper rationality, impartiality, deliberation and friendship, the question needs to be asked: what are they in a position to do? More specifically, one needs to ask about people's capabilities. Nussbaum (2000: 78-80) claims that each person is a worthy human being on the basis of the fact that the person is able 'to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a truly human way'; 'to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection'; 'to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction – to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation [and] to have the capability for both justice and friendship'; 'to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others [which] entails, at a minimum, protections against discrimination on the basis of sex, race, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, or national origin'; 'to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other(s)'. I am attracted to Nussbaum's claim that people are capable of showing 'concern for other human beings' and I want to claim that this is a good starting point to begin to educate for democratic justice. Recognising that people have this capability – to show concern for other human beings – is a good starting point from which we can catapult a pedagogy of democratic justice. If Nussbaum is correct, and I wish to believe she is, then I cannot imagine religious extremists, social and economic bigots, and political autocrats incapable of showing concern for others. Why then does the African Union exist with its NEPAD agenda aimed at democratising societies on the continent? Once I accept that all people have the capability to show concern for others, then I can begin to make more advances, such as to reason with others and to enter into dialogical relationships – more specifically and eventually about deliberative engagements about friendship. It is in this regard that I agree with Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, who claim that the promise of a deliberative democratic theory (and cultivating friendship is in my mind connected to such a theory) lies in a concern for finding terms of cooperation that each partner can accept because contemporary societies are driven by deep conflict and moral disagreement (Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 26).

Seyla Benhabib (1996: 68) also explains this deliberative democratic project as ‘a model [in the making I would add] for organising the collective and public exercise of power in the major institutions of a society on the basis of the principle that decisions affecting the *well-being of a collectivity* (achievable with a sense of showing concern for the other) can be viewed as the outcome of a procedure of free and reasoned deliberation among individuals considered as moral and political equals’ (my italics).

In conclusion, in this article I have argued that education, responsibility and democratic justice ought to be seen as a collective discourse aimed at achieving the following: firstly, making an effort to understand and appreciate as far as possible features of other people’s cultures; secondly, curbing one’s arrogant moral bias against others whom one might hardly understand; and thirdly, listening appreciatively to the stories of others we may like, dislike or despise. Finally, I have argued that any democratic justice project is bound to be short-lived if it does not educate people to be non-doctrinaire, impartial, deliberative and friendly. Only then can we begin to think of a more just Africa in the making.

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Spiralling reference: A case study of apprenticeship into an academic community of practice

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Abstract

Recent South African meditations on the complex nature of postgraduate supervision and teaching by Fataar (2005) and Waghid (2005; 2007) provide excellent accounts of the dialogic space between lecturer/supervisor and student. However, these accounts need to be supplemented by an explicit discussion of the broader academic communities of practice into which postgraduate students should be inducted. This article uses the science studies of Latour (1993; 1999), the network theory of Collins (1998; 2004), and the formalisation studies of Stinchcombe (2001) to trace the apprenticeship of one master's student into an academic community. It traces her implication within ever expanding intellectual networks and their academic practices as she is inducted into the peculiar rigours of postgraduate research.

Introduction

Aslam Fataar and Yusef Waghid's accounts of their own postgraduate supervisory and teaching practices have illuminated a difficult and seldom explored facet of South African academic life. By bringing to attention the complex and negotiated dialogical space between supervisor/lecturer and student, the personal identities that meet within this space, the fractured apartheid landscape and the pressure of academic demands, they have provided invaluable insights into postgraduate supervision and teaching. Their accounts, however, need to be supplemented by a description of what it means to be inducted at a postgraduate level into an academic community of practice. The supervisor/lecturer is a gateway to a whole new set of practices

and networks that move beyond the dialogic space between supervisor and student into the wider intellectual communities beyond them. This article provides an account of how one student was inducted into a specific academic community and the complexity of how this community functions. In conclusion, the article argues for a combination of the intense interior and dialogic accounts of supervisor/student relationships with a broader account of the academic networks and communities that circulate around the relationship.

Aslam Fataar and Yusef Waghid on postgraduate supervision and teaching

Picking up and substantially elaborating on Jansen, Herman and Pillay's (2004) account of various student experiences of the doctoral proposal process, Fataar (2005) provides a nuanced meditation on his own relationship with two of his doctoral students. He quickly captures the fragile and personalised nature of the interaction. The students were both older than him and he had recently undergone a foundational shift in his own intellectual life from emancipatory political logics to a more modest position of attempting to understand intricate human relationships. From wanting to liberate with truth as his sword, Fataar now listened in an open and humble way to authentic contextualised experiences. This carried over into the supervisory relationship. He attended to the affective dimensions of supervision, aware of the subtle energies flowing through what is a very human endeavour. In his two students, however, he found a strong attachment to the very emancipatory drive he had just stepped away from.

My intellectual interaction with the two students was informed by the intention of getting them to understand what I regarded as the social complexity that characterised contemporary South Africa. I believed that both students initially viewed their study along the lines of a single dimension, in terms of which they regarded successful progress and change as the outcome of activist-driven programmatic intervention. This approach, I believed, eschews an understanding of the intricacies involved in change in especially the type of marginal and impoverished contexts in which they proposed to do their research (Fataar 2005: 53).

The struggle became one of shifting his students away from an attempt to immediately use what they were learning as a weapon of freedom to spending

more time and care understanding the involvedness of the situation in its own terms. There was nothing simple about the shift, as the students' initial identities were intimately tied to an interventionist mindset that desired transformation. Fataar goes on to show in the paper how he managed the process of shifting his students from wanting to immediately work with the practicality of the idea towards a scholarly identity that stayed with the idea and the situation until the full complexity established itself. This happened within a process of mutual engagement based on trust and respect.

I pushed and prodded them to question their intellectual assumptions, and to develop some critical distance from their understanding of their proposed study or research unit of analysis. Shifts in their thinking were never imposed. They were always the outcome of the serendipity embedded in ongoing conversations in which the views held by the students and their ability to recognise and adjust their thinking were affirmed and valued. While I always engaged, at times robustly, with their conceptual approaches, our relations were always based on affirming their capacity and autonomy in deciding on the type of study they wanted to propose (Fataar 2005: 49).

Yusef Waghid delicately puts his finger on the above as an 'act of loving'. It is an insightful move, all the more so because it deploys the substantial armoury of Derrida's deliberations on friendship (Derrida 1997) to elaborate on what is involved. Friendship is an act of caring that is not based on any expectation of reward or pleasure; it is done for the good of the other without conditions attached. The capacity and autonomy of the student is respected in the process of evoking their potentiality. This creates a space for authentic learning where both student and lecturer can engage without the pressures of obligation appended, without the unspoken 'you owe me, so do what I secretly want'. This act of loving involves giving without the weight of the gift attached.

Waghid (2005, 2007) combines the act of friendship with the need for forgiveness, and in so doing manages to locate the supervisor/student relationship firmly within the context of our apartheid past. Forgiveness is the creation of a free space where new possibilities can arrive after repeated acts of harm and vengeance. It breaks the cycle of reaction and allows a fresh opening where the imagination can again breathe and grow. By revealing his own personal experiences of racial discrimination Waghid helped his students break their silences, uncover their own experiences and break through into

another world, one that did not repeat patterns based on the racialised past but confronted it and in the process stepped beyond into a new space of possibility. Imagination, forgiveness and friendship thus form a pedagogic trinity for Waghid that theorises the processes of postgraduate supervision and teaching. Rather than imitating their master's voice, or merely going through the motions needed to get a degree for market purposes, students find themselves within an engaging process that pushes them to take the initiative. It is not the case that academic rigour is lost, only that it is continuously directed at students finding their own voice, one that is free to accept or reject the voice of their supervisor. It is a 'dialectic of freedom' where the student learns to critically negotiate the terrain in their own terms and the supervisor carefully and respectfully engages with them through the process.

It is salutary to remember that in Hegel's *Phenomenology* the realisation of a dialectic of freedom along with the forgiveness it entailed was an astonishingly difficult and late stage to reach, and although I do not want to get into Hegelian technicalities I would like to simply point out that deeply underpinning both freedom and forgiveness within the *Phenomenology* was its opposite – the master-slave relationship and the apprenticeship it involved. It is precisely this dimension to the supervision relationship that I think has been obscured by the account of friendship and love given above. Fataar has some sensitivity to this paradoxical dynamic in his pointing to how he laboured hard at establishing his scholarly authority by getting his students to read his own work and then by working on them making the same transition he had from a world of practical engagement to a world of *verstehen*. He pushed them into a humble understanding of the forces that be by getting them to submit to the complexity involved, silencing them down to the point where a careful listening could occur. But the point that both do not emphasise owing to the nature of their own focus is the very real need for a student to submit to the rules, processes and realities of academic communities as a precondition to finding their academic voice within it. I would like to elaborate on the nature of this process using one of my own master's students as an exemplar.

Brenda and the NRF project

Brenda is an English teacher in the small town of Dundee in Natal. She is a middle-class, white mother/wife/teacher who is involved in both school teaching and the attempt to implement the current reforms of Curriculum 2005 at a Grade 10-12 level. She was actively involved at a district level with introducing teachers to the new reform and its implications for English teaching. When initially starting her master's course in 2004 she was interested in researching what genre theory had to say about her teaching of English with an eye to improving her own practices and those of her colleagues around her. This activist stance was very similar to Aslam Fataar's two PhD students. However, in doing Curriculum Studies as her specialisation, she suddenly found herself caught up by a research programme that found her useful. I am intentionally giving the research programme a half life of its own, for it is in her intersection with it that both she and the research programme form a hybrid that resulted in her research work.

The research programme was a small NRF-funded project at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) investigating the impact of the latest phase of the implementation of C2005 at a Grade 10 level. It provided seven bursaries to master's students who were able to do research on this topic. Brenda was one of the seven selected and inducted into a small community of practice. The three directors of the project (Ken Harley, Carol Bertram and Wayne Hugo) had utilised a Bernsteinian framework (Bernstein 1996) to construct the research programme, picking up on an initial suggestion by Volker Wedekind. Under time pressure to get the proposal in, they had used the work of colleagues of theirs at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, as well as work further afield, specifically from Portugal, to help construct a comprehensive research programme. This was possible as both the conceptual apparatus and research instruments were already tried and tested, with clear exemplars published in research journals or available from doctoral research and other research programmes. This enabled an ability to track the reform process from its initial stages of conception to its later phases of implementation. Brenda and the rest of the cohort doing Curriculum Studies were introduced to this research programme at the beginning of their master's course. They were informed that a massive amount of specialising work would be needed before they could begin their research and that their research question and methods

would have to articulate closely with the programme. The idea that they were individual researchers gloriously creative engaged in the quest to answer big questions of education in their own voice was cut down from the beginning. They were apprentices involved in a process far larger than themselves and they would have to learn all the specialised languages and tools necessary to make a small contribution to the field, 'a walk-on part in the war' as Pink Floyd would have it. These practices were all already clearly demarcated and a 'community of the adequate' from the educational field stood by, ready and able to judge whether they had managed a passable performance.

Latour and intellectual tools

It was in the tools that the key to their training as educational researchers lay. All the specialised theories and key debates were initially glossed in favour of introducing them to the materials and instruments they would need to understand and manipulate when doing their research. Two sets of tools were initially offered them, one set to analyse the relevant curriculum policy documents and another to analyse relevant classroom practices. Both sets of tools had to be similar enough to provide coherence across the policy practice divide but also different enough to work at their specific levels. They had to apply the analytical tools to the policy documents and classroom transcripts, making explicit judgements that were discussed and compared with their peers before being rejected or accepted. The correctness of the judgements did not depend on peer agreement however, but on specialised explicit criteria and the skill of the lecturer, who would often in the early stages have to point out when and why they were wrong, either as an individual or as a group. Reliability came not from group consensus but from explicit specialised criteria that the expert lecturer continually opened out and displayed to the group. A similar process to Fataar's establishment of academic authority through getting his students to engage with his work was underway here, except here the conduit was an impersonal set of academic tools. Although the group was reading in and around issues of curriculum, it was through these research tools that they got their first induction into what research at a master's level demanded in relation to the NRF project.

The students then returned to their classrooms with these tools. The instruction was to bring the classroom experience back to the research group in an altered, reduced and more ordered form for discussion and comparison.

It was an exercise in metonymy. The space and interactions of the classroom experience were classified into various analytical components and brought back to the university as a transcript with codes attached. It was emphasised that bringing the real, live, messy classroom back to the research group was both impossible and beside the point. Crucially, however, something of the classroom experience had to be preserved in its transport to the seminar room, something had to stay the same in the shift from tape to transcript to code. A small number of significant features from a thriving school life had to cross over the gap, keeping something invariant in the recontextualisation. Much was gained in the loss. The seminar room was quiet and air-conditioned. More importantly, the various students could place their analyses on the same table and compare not only with each other, but with previous analyses done in the years before and with other analyses done in different provinces and different countries. An enormous expansion of comparative ability in time and space opened out for analysis in the quiet, intensely focused room. Lessons could be rearranged, parts placed next to each other and recombined, patterns looked for that would not emerge from a researcher having gone from classroom to classroom in the real world trying to absorb the actual thing. In losing the classroom, the students gained insight into it. By the way, this account parallels a fascinating account of how scientists attempt to establish whether the Amazon is expanding or contracting (Latour 1999). Both show how to make sense of 'jungles', whether they be the leafy or concrete version.

This changed both the students and the lessons they had brought back with them. The students learnt to take the lessons apart and reorganise them based on principles standardised within educational and, in this case, Bernsteinian research traditions. This broke them out of a practitioner attitude. They began to grasp what it means to become a researcher – how to make the many shifts from concrete to abstract and back again. The significant point was that at none of the steps along the way was there a sudden massive divide between the real classroom and the theoretical apparatus. The gap may appear as a chasm if the extreme end points are focused on, but in the actual practice of research small recontextualisations continually cross small gaps, moving from concrete to abstract and back again (Latour 1993). The key, as always, is to look at the tools being used. In this specific case the tool is a Bernsteinian analytical matrix that divides classroom life into 36 variables. Around half the variables explore who is in control of the selection,

sequencing, pacing and evaluation of classroom life (what Bernsteinians call framing); the other half goes into how the subject lesson structures its relationship to other subjects, its own subject’s subsets and its relationship to everyday knowledge (classification). If one reads a philosophical discussion on the merits of framing (e.g. Dowling 1999), this is so far removed from the classroom that it is hard for a student or academic to see the connection, but starting with a grid that combines the two in an explicit way means that by starting in the middle the gap is far easier and smaller to cross both ways. The table below gives an example from variable 1.

	F++	F+	F-	F--
1. In the introduction /discussion to a task	Learners have very little or no control	Learners have a little control	Learners have some control	Learners have substantial control
	The selection of knowledge in the discussion is almost always determined by the teacher. Learners are rarely able to disrupt the selection to suit their own needs. Their interjections are generally dismissed or ignored or they are not seen to make any interjections.	The selection of knowledge in the discussion is determined by the teacher most of the time. On very few occasions is selection varied according to learner intervention or production.	Learners have the opportunity to vary the selection of knowledge some of the time. Some learner suggestions are accepted, or the teacher alters the selection, the course of discussion according to learners’ productions.	Learners often make decisions around the selection of focus and the discussion in the classroom. They are usually given the opportunity to determine the discussion and activity of the lesson.

What we see in the table is a tool that is still abstract but has come very close to what is happening in the classroom, to the point where a beginning researcher is able to clearly recognise and pigeonhole real live activity within a cold, hard abstract matrix. But for this to work properly across the various lessons collected there has to be a careful collection of information that records the time and space co-ordinates of the lesson, its placing within a sequence of lessons, the subject, the school, the type of school, the area, etcetera, etcetera, all of which allows a returning to the sample and a reconstituting of its history. After all, what is the point of taking just any lesson to analyse? In terms of the project, it must be either Grade 9 or 10,

must be taken from the area around Pietermaritzburg and must range across different types of schools identified according to a complex mixture of old classifications (ex-DET, ex-model C) and current location within rural, urban 'township', or middle-class suburb. If all of these other criteria are not carefully held in place, then although we can fill the analytical matrix with information, our ability to compare across grids is seriously impaired. There needed to be compatibility and comparability across the lessons gathered as well as within the lesson analysed.

With this in place the students were able to compare lessons, subjects, schools, provinces and countries, depending on the amount of data synthesised in the table and the reference to similar work done in other schools, provinces and countries. The local flavour of the lessons had now been lost and replaced with a set of abstract diagrams. The distance between the two positions seems extreme, but it is possible to retrace each small step between these acute end points until we reach the middle point where a student takes a transcript still ringing with the actual lesson and places a wriggling part of it within a specific box in a matrix, making the actions of the lesson into a sign that will become part of a numbered code (Latour 1999). It is a split second of replacement, and it is in this finest of details that the work of postgraduate research is partly done.

The students were now able to take their various lessons and place them within a comparative table, transporting the complex happenings within numerous classrooms at different times into one structured A4 piece of paper. It was on this page that the search for patterns began and was held in comparison with other patterns that emerged in other subjects, grades, schools, provinces, countries. Is this qualitative or quantitative research? Somehow this hybrid moves between these two extremes so popular in research methodology courses, for looked at from the inside it is both. Only at the end point, depending on whether the student has statistically compared a range of results or honed in on one subject or one school or one teacher can we call it quantitative or qualitative research. But what is clear is that crucial to the whole enterprise is the rule of consistency. Across the whole research community must exist an explicit set of standards that allow similarities and differences to be matched and placed, and it is this that the postgraduate student must be inducted into.

The key to understanding the whole process outlined above is how reconfiguration works more through transformation than imitation. The point is not to carry slices of classroom life straight into a research paper (as useful as this occasionally is), or to try and mimic the lesson. Reconfiguration happens where each step transforms the previous one but in ways where there are explicit rules to check if the recontextualisation was accurate until eventually one reaches a purely abstract rendition of specific essential and previously invisible forms. Resemblance between the final formulation of the lessons structure and the live lesson is hard to see. The first is all classification and framing percentages, the second sound and fury. As the analysis proceeds through increasing steps of abstraction it loses all that is local, particular, multiple and flavoursome and gains in levels of universal comparison, calculation, compatibility and dryness.

Stinchcombe's conditions of abstraction

Behind this process of abstraction lies a basic set of conditions needed for formalisation to work and we can use the above example to demonstrate what they are. Firstly the abstractions must be what Stinchcombe (2001, 21-41) calls 'cognitively adequate', and he lays out four criteria for cognitive adequacy. Firstly the abstraction must be *accurate*. It must effectively represent the area of classroom life by ensuring that the abstraction has rightly grasped the area being researched in a way that is suited to its purpose. One needs to be specific, detailed and explicit as to what the abstraction means. When exploring who has control over the selection of what is to happen in the introduction of the lesson, the rubric is very clear and precise on what exactly F++ (strong framing) means. Secondly, the abstraction must work towards cognitive *economy* where nothing unnecessary to the abstraction is included. It must be easy to think with, simple to use. Again the above rubric shows this criteria up clearly. It would take a particularly ungifted student not to grasp what the above rubric is pointing to. The criterion of economy must not dominate over *sufficiency* – the attempt to extract all the essential elements, not only a dominant few. Finally, the *scope* of the formalisation must be applicable to most of the situations it meets within the tangible world it abstracts from.

The expansion of Brenda's academic network

At this point in Brenda's apprenticeship she had two choices: either she could compare what was happening in her subject at her school within Grade 10 with other schools (a horizontal comparison) or she could track how the structure of her subject altered as it moved from national to local levels during the reform process (a vertical comparison). She chose the second option owing to her involvement in provincial and district training of the reformed FET curriculum. In doing this she availed herself of all the research work (conceptual, empirical and its various hybrids) of the NRF research group. Specifically, she was able to use the work of a lecturer doing doctoral research on a similar area in terms of History. Unfortunately for her, Carol Bertram was still in the early stages of gathering data, so only small elements of her work were available. A similar problem presented itself with another member of staff also engaged in doctoral work that had a Bernsteinian edge in Mathematics (Dianne Parker). Furthermore, the work of Ken Harley's master's and PhD students who were doing or had done Bernsteinian theses focused on the dynamics within school life and between different kinds of schools. So Brenda began to expand her network outwards from the resources and training offered her at UKZN.

It was immediately noticeable to her that the major Bernsteinian doctoral studies she could rely on to teach her at the lower level of master's research came mainly from Cape Town. Of the six major PhD theses either complete or near completion (Zain Davis, Mignon Breier, Cheryl Reeves, Jeanne Gamble (2004), Heidi Bolton and Ursula Hoadley (2005)), it was the last that offered her own specific project some guidance about how to proceed. Hoadley's work had been used in the first year master's curriculum course to perform the apprenticing function, but its focus was more on the specialisation of teachers. Instead, Brenda turned to two of the supervisors of these PhD students – Joe Muller and Paula Ensor. Both had done their PhD and other original work on what Bernstein called the Pedagogic Device – a term that captured the manner in which specific systems transformed existing forms of knowledge and practice into educational shapes and structures. It was clear that in her network expanding to include the work done at the University of Cape Town she was entering into an institution that had done more work in more influential ways in terms of Bernstein than UKZN. It had produced more Bernsteinian PhD students and more Bernsteinian publications and

had a stronger international set of connections to Bernsteinians across the world. The reason for this is not hard to find. Basil Bernstein had visited and lectured on the campus twice and had sustained intellectual contact with both Muller and Ensor.

Randall Collins and intellectual networks

The work of Randall Collins on the sociology of intellectuals and interaction ritual chains (IRCs) offers a useful set of tools to help us understand how intellectual networks operate. In his massive *The sociology of philosophies: A global theory of intellectual change* Collins provides us with 'the principles that determine intellectual networks' (Collins 1998: xviii). Using a peculiar combination of Durkheim and Goffman to build a model of situational causality (Collins 2004: 9), his analysis assists the reader to move away from assuming that intellectual ideas somehow spread through the ether or are only due to the charisma of the person, their genius or their creativity. Collins points to how intellectual power is constituted, located and reproduced within complex networks and lineages that work on a micro-interactional level. Using Bernstein and the community of practice that has built itself around him, we can illustrate Brenda's induction into the network.

The personal impact of Basil Bernstein through his tangible presence in South Africa was a vital reason for his continuing influence in the country and the networks Brenda was increasingly finding out about as her research progressed. Paula Ensor encouraged Bernstein to come to South Africa in July of that year to both present a lecture series on his work and attend the Kenton Conference. Ensor was then engaged in her own PhD and was being supervised by Paul Dowling, who himself had been supervised by Bernstein. I make these genealogical points because they are crucial to understanding academic networks and their influence. It is vital for postgraduate students to grasp that when selecting a supervisor they are not just engaging with a person in a dialogue but with the network of contacts this person carries as a part of his or her own intellectual past. Neither Fataar nor Waghid emphasises this point owing to the nature of their own focus. The interpersonal relationship between supervisor/student must be combined with the wider intellectual network and community of practice the supervisor is implicated in. Using Bernstein and the work of Randall Collins on the nature of intellectual IRCs, we can elaborate on this underemphasised dimension of postgraduate labour.

Bernstein's visit left lasting impressions and energies. Here is Ursula Hoadley's account of going to his second lecture series in Cape Town:

He was a small man with an enormous person. Very natty Armani suits, and an acerbic campy wit. At the time I was completely intimidated by the lectures. He was laying out horizontal and vertical discourse, and on the way traversing the breadth of sociological enquiry in elegant sweeps. It was exhilarating. Most of it went over my head at the time, but it felt like the real thing. Four years later I went away for a week on my own, and read volume one to volume five. That's when the insight came into the way the ideas develop over time, how the theory is built. And the elegance that emerges ... His impact has been more through his writings for me, and through those who have been close to him, especially Joe, Paula and Zain. There was something that was intuitive. The first time I read him I was energised and excited by the unity of the theory, the construction of a broad picture, pixilated by concepts that allowed one to go deep When I came to pedagogy I was drawn to the precision. There isn't really anyone else who provides the tools for principled analysis of the how and the what of the stuff that happens in classrooms (U. Hoadley, personal communication).

Hoadley then went on to produce precisely that, a principled analysis of the how and what of the stuff that happens in classrooms, the thesis Brenda used to help induct herself into a Bernsteinian research tradition. We pick up how an intellectually charged experience with Bernstein was physically carried by the participant and transformed into academic endeavour.

For our particular purposes three concepts immediately present themselves as useful: interaction rituals, emotional energy and cultural capital.

An interaction ritual has four basic elements and four consequences. Two or more people are needed in some kind of tangible interaction; a boundary develops between insiders and outsiders; a common object of attention is focused on; with a common mood or emotional experience attached (Collins 2004: 48). When successful in combination, these elements result in: a feeling of solidarity; emotional energy; collective symbols; and sanctions against those who violate the symbols. What distinguishes intellectual IRs from others is their abstract and generalised focus and the attention given over a sustained period to developing and justifying an argument or position that claims to get at the truth of the matter. We clearly see from the participant's quote above that the Bernstein lectures in Cape Town generated a mutual focus of attention and shared intensification of mood. This consolidated into

a shared reality that was experienced as a membrane between the situation and other situations to the point where participants committed their future research work to what had opened out within its space. Bernstein's work has coalesced into precise symbols that carry the identity of the group and have the power when used to reinvoke the community. At its most abstract level the symbolic formula that carries this effect for Bernsteinians is the esoteric

E

C+-(i\ē), F+- (i\ē)

But at the most tangible level it was the Bernstein seminars held in Cape Town in 1994 and 1997 that began the process. These central meeting points have continued through Bernstein conferences. In 2002, the second international Bernstein conference was held in Cape Town, where international Bernsteinians intersected with their local counterparts. These conferences are held every second year in different countries (Lisbon 2000, Cape Town 2002, Cambridge 2004, New York 2006) that have strong internal Bernsteinian communities. These IRs are also sustained on a daily basis through e-mail contact, doctoral and master's supervision, externalling, research projects, seminars and publishing ventures (and on a nightly basis in assorted pubs and restaurants where current and future debates as well as reminiscences of past events are carried through). It is partly through interaction ritual chains that we can begin to understand how the Bernsteinian community acts as a player on the South African intellectual stage, for it is through these local encounters that we understand how macro intellectual effects are generated. There is an 'ecology of human bodies coming together and moving apart across a landscape' (Collins 1998: 23) that provides us with a picture of how the Bernsteinian community in South Africa functions as a 'pocket of solidarity' (Collins 2004: 15) rather than some esoteric force mysteriously carried through his work. It is such communities that we as supervisors must both be intimately involved in and induct our postgraduate students into.

Emotional energy was clearly something that Bernstein imparted to those who met him. Emotional energy is the feeling of exhilaration, achievement and enthusiasm generated by successful participation in an interaction ritual. It results in creativity and initiative, which, when successful, generates more

emotional energy. This partly had to do with Bernstein's personal charm and intelligence, but it carries through, rewarding involvement in interaction rituals in specific places. Bernsteinian research has a far stronger presence in Cape Town than in KwaZulu-Natal, as Brenda quickly discovered, and this partly has to do with the number of successful interaction rituals around Bernstein that occurred in Cape Town and the current emotional energy that resides there with those who intersected directly with Bernstein himself. It is a complicated type of energy that is hard to pin down, but is vital to sustaining a community, even if those caught in its functioning wish to deny its import. Its force should not be underestimated, for, as Collins points out, we are all 'emotional energy seekers' on certain levels (Collins 2004: 373). Although Brenda had not met Bernstein, Muller or Ensor, she had read their work and listened to accounts of what they were like from seminars and from her supervisor. The closest she got to the Cape Town circle was through a circulated e-mail in which she praised the PhD work of Hoadley and was very pleased to hear that Hoadley was flattered by her comments. Such small interactions and bursts of emotional energy are vital to a student's research, even if they are in the outer circles of purgatory. However, the emotional energy generated from Brenda's peripheral contact cannot be compared with those who had first-hand contact with both Bernstein and his most influential students. By being located at UKZN and having me as her supervisor, she was automatically at a second remove from genealogical contact and the emotional energy it carried.

Collins' theory of emotional energy does pin down a vital force running through intellectual communities, but it does not come close to the subtlety of Fataar and Waghid's accounts of the complex energies surrounding postgraduate academic apprenticeship. Furthermore, both Fataar and Waghid had brought out the difficult South African dynamics operating at this level, a dynamic that 'emotional energy' as a construct has no grasp over. So as useful as Collins, Stinchcombe and Latour are in terms of adding another dimension to Fataar and Waghid's work, a similar point can be made the other way round.

At this stage in her academic life, Brenda's cultural capital in terms of the Bernsteinian community was small. Cultural capital, according to Collins, is what a person gains as she moves through a set of encounters with other people and their texts:

As individuals move through this grid of encounters, they generate their own ... interaction ritual chains. Each person acquires a personal repertoire of symbols loaded with membership significance. Depending on the degree of cosmopolitanism and social density of the group situations to which they have been exposed, they will have a symbolic repertoire of varying degrees of ... generalised and particularised contents. This constitutes their cultural capital (Collins 1998: 29).

They develop their own interaction ritual chains that provide them with an individual set of contacts and symbols. The contacts are as important as the symbols, for it is in people intersecting with each other that both emotional energy and the complex and intuitive aspects hidden behind actual texts come out, as well as hunches about future directions and discussions about the latest research tools. Within the Bernstein community of South Africa some individuals dominate attention because of the extent and power of their cultural capital and emotional energy. This results in a stratified intellectual community with various roles willingly taken on or settled for (Collins 1998: 37-40). Certain individuals not only have been in direct contact with Bernstein and benefited from his direct attention, but are also at the forefront of the current community. This can be seen from the papers they have published in leading international and local journals, their direct contact and collaborations with leading international Bernsteinians, the place they are allocated at conferences and, most crucially, their ability to guide what form future research agendas are going to take. There is a distinct division of labour between those who ask the questions and set out what problematics are currently interesting and those who answer the questions and carry out the solutions. At conferences it is those who are posing generative problems who carry the most prestige, not those functionally carrying out and elaborating on the community's research instructions.

The contrast can be seen starkly if one compares the work of Brenda with that of Joe Muller, clearly recognised as one of the leaders of the Bernsteinian community both locally and internationally. Brenda took already existing rubrics and applied them to a local situation, using tools she had been given to make sense of her specific research area. Working with what was already established knowledge and practice within the Bernsteinian community, she replicated what has been done in her own locality. She did make certain interesting moves of her own, but the value of her work lies in additional example, not new paths forward. Muller, on the other hand, works on

the parts of Bernstein's corpus that are undeveloped and problematic, suggesting both new routes forward and substantial revisions of accepted orthodoxy, making new discoveries and generating new problematics vital to an intellectual community's continued thriving. He might have started out by adding to what Bernstein has already said, but this has quickly morphed into a pushing of the boundaries of Bernstein's work rather than remaining within scholastic commentary. It is this that gives him copious amounts of emotional energy and cultural capital within the community. As Collins (1998: 32) points out, it is those who have a feeling for where the next action will be, not those solving an existing problem, who have the most cultural capital and emotional energy. Posing fruitful and generative questions provides space for others to do their own work within, precisely for beginning scholars like Brenda. But she is still able to follow what the latest developments are through early drafts of future conference papers, snippets of e-mail conversation, PhD developments and conversations with those in contact with Muller, Ensor and other leading Bernsteinians. What it does mean is that mastering Bernstein's work does not in any way guarantee a powerful academic future, for she is working as an apprentice in a space given for followers, not asking questions that need answering. Nor is she doing her research within an academic environment particularly conducive to Bernsteinian theory. Paula Ensor is currently Dean of Humanities at the University of Cape Town, Joe Muller is Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Affairs at the University of Cape Town, and Bernsteinian seminars are held on a monthly basis. There is no such equivalent at UKZN.

So it is not surprising that it was to the work of Muller and Ensor that Brenda turned her attention. Although some of their work was already out in the public domain, much of it was either in press or still in development, with one of the major sources of both being the recent Basil Bernstein Symposiums. The Cambridge Symposium (2004) had occurred half way through the first year of Brenda's master's. All the papers submitted for the conference were on the Web and it was here that she found the key papers that helped her elaborate how to go about her research. She was helped by her supervisor, who had gone to the conference and could provide her with blow-by-blow accounts of what had happened in the presentations and what the key new issues and debates were. Her understanding of what a research community was had now expanded out from the six other students working on the NRF project, the lecturers involved in the project at UKZN, to the doctoral

students at UCT and Wits, to the key Bernsteinians in South Africa, to the important players on the international scene.

Enchanted by this thriving research community, she began to both reread the work of Basil Bernstein she had been introduced to at the beginning of her master's and to search the Internet for more information. It was here that she stumbled on the work of Dowling, specifically an unpublished paper of his on Framing (Dowling 1999). Although his work had been dealt with in the curriculum course, she had not been ready for what it contained: a powerful attack on the work of Bernstein from an ex-student turned heretic. It opened her out to an uglier and more juicy side of the work of intellectuals, where apprentices eventually challenge their masters and the masters do not step meekly aside the way that Virgil did for Dante in the *Purgatorio*. This sensitivity was heightened by Michelson's critique of the work of Muller that had appeared in the *Journal of Education* (Michelson 2004). His work, along with Ensor's, had been of particular usefulness to her. The heroes she had been using to structure her work both locally and internationally were enmeshed in battles of their own, their work attacked on grounds of being incoherent, esoteric, conservative, vicious and embittered. The community of research she had innocently joined was hemmed in on all sides by enemies pointing out all sorts of problems and issues. What she had not known was that whole university departments despised Bernstein, that research organisations like the HSRC were divided on his usefulness, that Bernstein's work had attracted controversy and critique since the 1970s and that this had not abated. Having been introduced to Bernstein from the internal workings of research communities structured around his work, this opening out to a set of massive critical debates helped her to see more clearly what was at stake in his work and how to start to think more independently and critically about her own research work.

Enemies are clear to the eye; far harder to work through are the various alliance partners to the Bernsteinian project. Brenda had initially been interested in a genre analysis of the Grade 10 English syllabus using the work of Halliday and the Systemic Functional Grammarians. It was only the already functioning nature of the NRF FET research programme at UKZN that twisted her away from this interest. But when attending workshops by David Rose on how to teach literacy she noticed that his work consisted of a synthesis between the unholy white, mostly dead, male trinity of Halliday, Vygotsky and Bernstein.

It was not only Bernstein's enemies that she had to come to terms with, but those whose work was being used in conjunction with his. This is a far more difficult set of networks to negotiate than enemies, as the line between the two has to be identified, negotiated, altered and crossed, rather than a simple standing across a divide and shouting at each other. Here the work of each and all has to be mastered and then synthesised in such a way as to produce deeper and more effective research programmes. SFG helped the Bernsteinians get into the finer details of how language and power worked in education. Vygotsky and the Activity theorists helped the Bernsteinians get into the inner working of cultural intersections. These intersections were beyond her current focus and she had to leave these creative new developments to those who had already mastered at least one of the three fields. Here again, a contrast with the work of Muller reveals the difference. His current collaborations are precisely with the leading SFG proponents in Australia and the thinking through of the fertile links between the two communities. This does not mean that Muller is reading their earlier work in the library as Brenda did; it means he is visiting them in Australia, they are visiting him in Cape Town and together they are publishing the fruits of their collaborations (Christie and Martin 2007).

But these were not the only alliances Bernsteinians in South Africa were engaged in. Other alliances were between different types of organisations. In Cape Town, Muller was part of a slightly holier trinity with Nick Taylor and Penny Vinjevoold. Taylor runs one of the biggest research organisations in South Africa (JET) and Vinjevoold is currently the deputy director of education in South Africa. This was a crucial network, as it articulated across different types of institutions, private, governmental and academic (Fataar 2006). Both had met Bernstein before. It meant that the insights of Bernstein's work carried into different levels of the South African education system. Utilising the extensive research gathered through JET and the professional insight into the workings of the education system that Vinjevoold was privy to, Nick Taylor, Penny Vinjevoold and Joe Muller (1999, 2003) were able to launch a powerful attack on the principles behind the C2005 reform as well as its failed implementation and dire consequences for underprivileged learners.

This qualification takes us away from an image of the work of Bernstein looming massively on the South African horizon. For many research communities he is but one small dimension of their work. For example, the

well-established mathematics education research community in South Africa has picked up strongly on the work of Bernstein, but his contribution is one of many others (Vithal, Adler and Keitel 2005). Other research communities find the work of Bernstein helpful as an organising device, but quickly have to turn to other theorists for more specific and focused tools. For example, the Quantum project directed by Jill Adler found out early in its development that Bernstein could only carry them so far before they had to devise finer instruments.

Closer to home, Brenda's own supervisor was working on his own particular project that intersected with Bernstein's Pedagogic Device, using Hierarchical Network Theory to construct an analytical device that would help trace how a message reconfigured itself according to specific principles as it moved through the education system from macro to micro and from conception to implementation as well as flexibly track the inner workings of pedagogy. She used some of his work to help her think through her research. This was a risky move on her part, for unlike the other coalition groupings that had burgeoning research communities and influential networks of their own, hierarchical analysis was still in its foetal stages, with hardly any links or publications to carry its message. When coming to the stage of finding an external examiner she was risking having to rely on someone not familiar with what hierarchical analysis was and placing her research under doubt. Nevertheless, she pushed forward and submitted her thesis, titled *A Bernsteinian description of the recontextualising process of the National Curriculum Statement from conceptualisation to realisation in the classroom*. It had taken her just over two years to produce the thesis, but her work relied both on research done over a 40 year period and current developments that were not even in press yet. Her research focused on a small district in KwaZulu-Natal, but had travelled through various South African and international universities and research communities to construct its case. Her research community consisted of six other students engaged in the NRF project and her supervisor, but she had virtually met the whole Bernstein community as well as its enemies and alliance partners, using them all to gain clarity on what her research was and why it was relevant. Her own work, although only just complete, will be used in the NRF project, has already become a part of this paper, and has been used, along with other master's students' work, to produce papers on the implementation of the FET reform process that will articulate with work done at UCT on the same area.

This positive gloss should not obscure the fact that even though her network had expanded outwards, it had been mostly virtual, through e-mail, websites and electronic papers. Her actual contact with the community was minimal. Some kind of embodied interaction is vital to the continued strength of her *ee* and *cc*. The impact of virtual technologies on new forms of embodiment is a complex point and it deserves more research. How far can virtual technologies carry the embodied interactions of the Bernstein community to Brenda and vice versa? Collins thinks that virtuality will not carry our bodies very far and thus stresses actual physical interaction (Collins 2004: 53-64). I suspect that a younger generation will disagree. Secondly, the *lineage* she was working within was not a highly respectable one. Collins points out that the

most notable philosophers are not organisational isolates but members of chains of teachers and students who are themselves known philosophers and/or of circles of significant contemporary intellectuals (Collins 1998: 65).

Hoadley, Davis, Breier, Gamble, Reeves and Bolton were working with a lineage that went upwards from Ensor and Muller to Dowling and Bernstein. Their 'grandparents' were impressive. Brenda's supervisor had no such links, nor had she thought it important to try and select a supervisor with such links. It is a peculiar thing, to think of your supervisor in terms of lineage, of who s/he was taught by, but such factors are important considerations, especially at a PhD level. This points to a common misconception that what an intellectual does is hibernate off to some wooden cabin for ten years to write a masterpiece. It is not what research into intellectual communities such as Collins reveals. Successful intellectuals are engaged with life, implicated into vital networks and lineages and work within a community of teachers and students, peers, subordinates, superiors, colleagues, friends and partners, full of emotional energy and cultural capital.

Conclusion

Postgraduate supervision and teaching within South Africa is a complex event that has recently received useful, personalised but still theorised accounts of what it entails. Fataar and Waghid have provided us with detailed insights into the intersubjective and dialogical nature of the interaction within a South African educational landscape that demands forgiveness, friendship and imagination. As vital as these dimensions are, they need to be

supplemented by the intellectual networks and communities of practice that inform the research process along with the intellectual tools and processes of abstraction that accompany such endeavours. By providing an exemplar of how a master's student enters an intellectual community and is apprenticed into what it means to be a researcher this article attempts to demonstrate how this induction works. It is certainly not only the Bernstein community that completes this mission successfully, or the only way it can be done, but hopefully the exemplar shows up some of the complex issues and conditions needed for such an apprenticeship as well as some of the principles by which an intellectual community operates.

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Professionalising the supervision relationship: A reply to Waghid, Fataar and Hugo

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Abstract

In this article, I examine three claims that in *some* senses can hinder the supervisory process rather than facilitate it. These are the claims that the relationship between supervisor and student should be a friendship; that students writing their theses should demonstrate 'own voice'; and that students should choose supervisors on the authority of their academic lineage. I shall argue that although these claims are fruitful, we need to be aware of their inherent risks and of the appropriate limits of the key concepts.

Three recent articles (Waghid 2007; Fataar 2005; Hugo 2009) have focused on the doctoral supervisory process, particularly in the complex context of South African universities. This is a welcome addition to the literature because there are dynamics within the contemporary South African tertiary environment that are specific to it.¹ First, Waghid (2007) interprets the supervisory process as one of friendship, albeit a critical friendship, focused on trust, respect, imagination and critical learning. Given the injustices on the African continent, and in particular the inherited injustices of apartheid, Waghid (2007: 192) argues that the supervisory process should be conceived as a 'pedagogy of friendship [that] can contribute towards achieving democratic justice on the African continent'. In the second article, on the process of negotiating his students' 'senses of self' towards a more scholarly identity, Fataar (2005: 43) documents the strong hold that his students' political

¹ There is a growing body of literature that focuses on supervision practices in South Africa (Bitzer and Albertyn 2010, and chapters included in Walker and Thompson 2010). However, I am responding specifically to the three articles I have singled out.

and social experiences had on their identities, including their academic self-identities. 'Both were affected very deeply by the student and youth uprisings in 1976. They became politically conscious and active largely in the context of these uprisings. Their political identities were cultivated at high school and mushroomed into activism when they went to university'. It was therefore not surprising that when they started their PhD proposal, the one aimed to study 'the impact of a development programme on poor communities' and the other was 'committed to changing the world' (Fataar 2005, 44), a world characterised by injustices. Fataar's insightful article is a nuanced documentation of how he shifts their passionately held normative stances to an analytical stance more congruent with scholarly work. And in the third article, Hugo (2009) in turn focuses on a particular case in which a student is inducted into a specific scholarly community. Although rooted in the small academic community of South African Bernsteinians, Hugo sees his student's induction and increasing cultural capital as an entry into the international scholarly community. 'It is partly through interaction and ritual chains that we can begin to understand how the Bernsteinian community acts as a player on the South African intellectual stage, for it is through these local encounters that we understand how macro intellectual effects are generated' (Hugo 2009: 714).

All three of these articles deepen our understanding of the difficult South African context in which supervisory processes take place, a context fraught with inherited injustices, deeply-rooted political (and racial) identities, an inherent suspicion of authority, and a small academic educational research community. Waghid reminds us that the supervisory relationship is based on mutual trust and that the aim of research is to contribute to social justice; Fataar helps us understand how to negotiate the different identities that student and supervisor bring to the relationship; and Hugo stresses the centrality of authority in the process of induction into a global academic network.

In this article, I am going to address three key concepts: the notion of the supervisory process as one characterised by friendship, the notion of 'own voice' in doctoral research, and the notion of induction into a specific set of skills and thinking. I shall argue that although these concepts are fruitful, we need to be clear about their appropriate limits. I hope to show that particular interpretations of all three of these can potentially hinder rather than

facilitate the supervisory process. In each case, I will sketch an interpretation of academic community that I hope might avoid some of the noted pitfalls.

Waghid on cultivating friendship

Waghid (2007: 189) argues that ‘teaching and learning are constituent practices of co-operative, shared human activity which, like friendship, rely on time and familiarity’. No-one would disagree with the general sentiment of the supervisory process being a co-operative one, in which both parties invest time and resources with no guaranteed outcome. Especially in an environment that has an entrenched history of suspicion, the notion of friendship, of mutual engagement and trust, is an apt one. For Waghid, ‘desired student learning’ is achieved through ‘educating for friendship’ (Waghid 2007, 182).² However, Waghid’s notion of friendship I suspect has two difficulties: first, the argument that *equates* the supervisory process with one of friendship is weak; and, second, the unbounded notion of friendship can lead to a problematic over-personalised relationship in which the necessary element of professionalism is undermined.

Waghid argues, rightly, that the supervisory relationship is based on respect. Inherent in this is respect for the other as a rational being, as a moral agent, as a unique individual, and as a critical thinker whose ideas and values are worthy of being taken seriously (Waghid 2007: 188). To act with respect is also to act responsibly. To respect the other’s view doesn’t mean that one necessarily has to agree with the other. Respect for Waghid entails critical engagement, the ‘right to question, undermine and refute the judgement of others When students respect one another equally, they are said to be critical, because criticality demands that we give due consideration to the view of others’ (Waghid 2007: 184). Although he does not spell out what ‘due consideration’ entails, we can assume that it is in accordance with

² Rorty (1990b: 47) in fact makes a much stronger case than that for friendship; he argues for an ‘erotic’ relationship between student and professor: ‘Enactments of freedom are the principal occasions of the erotic relationships between teacher and student that Socrates and Allan Bloom celebrate and that Plato unfortunately tried to capture in a theory of human nature and of the liberal arts curriculum. But love is notoriously untheorisable. Such erotic relationships are occasions of growth, and their occurrence and their development are as unpredictable as growth itself. Yet nothing important happens in non-vocational higher education without them.’

established academic practices. So premise 1 is that an appropriate supervisory relationship is one of mutual respect and reciprocal academic responsibility.

For the second premise, Sherman's (1997) interpretation of friendship provides Waghid with a framework for his argument. Drawing on the constitutive elements of mutual attachment, mutual attunement and mutual action, Waghid advocates for a pedagogy of friendship.

[T]o act responsibly, one also needs to engender friendship through one's (inter)actions – the idea of 'doing things together', that is, a kind of mutuality whereby one engages another and is engaged in return. ... [M]utuality can be captured in Aristotelian phrases such as 'spending days together', 'spending time together', 'living together', acquiring experience of one another and becoming familiar with each other's habits, as well as in more transient interactions such as great conversation, knowing glances, a moment of shared repartee that lasts no longer than an instant, yet captures in that moment the magic of a special connection. For me, such a notion of friendship, which requires time and familiarity with each other's characters on the basis of doing things *with* each other, cannot be separated from the relationship that ought to exist between a university teacher and her students. (Waghid 2007: 189).

Here friendship is characterised by mutual engagement, mutual attunement and mutual action. This notion of mutuality includes the space to correct one another. 'It is this idea of correcting one another and learning from each other in an atmosphere of trust, goodwill and mutual benefit that holds much promise in reshaping teaching and learning' (Waghid 2007: 189). So, premise 2 is that a friendship is one of mutuality and 'correcting one another'. From premise 1 and 2, Waghid then draws the following conclusion, '[E]ducating people [in South Africa] ... is a matter of cultivating friendship' (Waghid 2007: 193). In short, the supervisor and student should be (Aristotelian/Shermanian) friends.

For a (deductive) argument to be sound, it must be both valid and the premises must be true. I think that Waghid offers strong evidence of how both premises are true; they rest on clearly demonstrated cases and solid grounds. It is true that productive supervisory relationships are ones of mutual respect and reciprocal academic responsibility. I also think it is true that friendships are relationships of mutuality and reciprocal correction. However, it is in the logical validity that I think the argument is less compelling. Just because the

supervisory relationship shares similar characteristics with a Shermanian kind of friendship doesn't allow one to deduce that the supervisory relationship therefore is *equivalent* to (or ought to be) a kind of friendship. Even if we do not couch the argument in a syllogistic form and regard it rather as an inductive argument based on analogy (or metaphor), I would still maintain that the argument is weak because there are salient elements in a supervisory relationship that do not translate into friendships.

That supervisory relationships should be based on mutual respect, trust and reciprocal responsibility is clear. This is generally held and uncontested. However, I want to argue that friendship in the Aristotelian/Shermanian/Waghidian sense is *inadequate* as the organising principle for supervisory relationships. I want to argue that there are certain constitutive elements of the supervisory relationship that do not hold in friendship.

The supervisory relationship as one based on professionalism

Carr (2000) examines the role of professionalism in teaching. Although there are numerous distinctions of what a profession is, he notes that there are five commonly cited criteria of professionalism: 1) professions provide some kind of important public service for civil necessities; 2) professions involve significant theoretical expertise and practical competence; 3) professions have a strong ethical dimension, usually expressed in a code of conduct; 4) professions are organised and regulated by an association that also oversees recruitment and discipline; and 5) professionals have a high degree of autonomy and the space to exercise independent judgement (Carr 2000: 23). Although there is contestation as to what degree teaching fulfils all five of these criteria, what is at the heart of the notion of teaching is the ethical dimension of teaching as an intelligent professional practice, i.e. a set of ways of doing and thinking with the specific goal of educating.

I want to highlight criteria 1, 2 and 4 and argue that these distinguish the supervisory relationship from that of friendship. First, criterion 1 highlights the notion of educational aims and practices in achieving those aims. What exactly those aims ought to be is a contested field, but suffice it to say that education has a purpose and inherited sets of public practices are aimed at fulfilling this purpose. According to Morrow (2007: 63), 'what characterises

professional teaching in all its possible forms is the practice of organising systematic learning. This ‘formal element’ of teaching provides us with a guideline for thinking about possible innovations and improvements in teaching methods, for thinking imaginatively, but not fancifully, about possible new ways of teaching’. This ‘formal element’³ that holds for *all* forms of teaching and learning – including, I hold, the supervision and writing of theses – distinguishes the educational relationship as part of a professional practice from less structured, albeit valuable, relationships such as friendships. A formally structured friendship with a specific goal would strike us as somewhat disingenuous, as a pseudo friendship. This, of course, is not to rule out that friends often do have shared goals that they undertake to realise in a joint effort. I can ask my friend to help me plan and prepare an elaborate meal. Perhaps this is the kind of joint project that Waghid has in mind when he characterises the supervisory relationship as friendship, but to hold that friends often jointly undertake a difficult task is different from the much more substantive and controversial claim that friendships are characterised by goals, i.e. that the ‘formal element’ of friendships is a public goal-oriented systematic practice. So, disagreements about what exactly the aims of teaching are do not detract from my argument that educational relationships by definition (i.e. in terms of their ‘formal element’) differ from those of friendships.

Even though there are contestations around what the aims of education are or ought to be, there is agreement that the aims cohere with some civic necessity. Waghid along with Morrow (2007) advocates that research in South Africa should be driven by ‘what is desirable for the public good’. And to achieve this is essentially a matter of applying accepted research techniques and developing consistent argumentation, or what Rorty terms ‘breaking the crust of convention’ (1990a: 41). I argue that the very public-goods-driven teleological nature of the supervision process and its structured practices are what make it essentially different from a friendship, albeit a Shermanian friendship with a critical and sceptical stance.

³ In an extraordinarily insightful little book, sadly passed over largely owing to political infighting, Kovesi (1967) distinguishes between ‘formal elements’ and ‘material elements’, the former closely linked to the essential function of the phenomenon which distinguishes it from other phenomena that may look, nevertheless, similar.

Criteria 2 and 4 are linked: that is, supervisors have formally acknowledged expertise to help students undertake their research under the public good rubric. For a supervisor not to be an expert would be to betray her student's (and the public's) trust.⁴ There are no doubt experts on educational research who are not at a university. But for the student to undertake a publically acknowledged doctoral thesis, she must enter into a relationship with one who is formally acknowledged to have that expertise by being officially a member of an accredited institution of higher learning that may confer degrees. That entails that the supervisor has two functions: both as an advisor who guides the student within a relationship of trust, respect and critical engagement, as well as an accountable representative of the academic community who will be evaluating the thesis on accepted conventions of doctoral standards. So, although the supervisor-student relationship is an intimate one-on-one relationship, with both investing in the relationship and being co-responsible for it, as an accountable representative of the academic community the supervisor has a separate responsibility towards the larger community. A degree is a signalling device to the rest of the world that this person has achieved an accepted standard of academic research. Whereas friends ought to be circumspect in what details they reveal about the other to the world at large, the supervisor would be unprofessional to keep the students' (academic) weaknesses away from public scrutiny.

In summary then, the notions of trust, respect, mutuality and 'correcting the other' are necessary for establishing a productive relationship between supervisor and student, and although such a relationship has resonances with friendship, it is essentially different because the supervisor is first and foremost an accountable professional situated in a publically acknowledged university that has been given the responsibility of autonomous control over the delivery of educational services essential to promoting vital social values.

⁴ Waghid does not hold that supervisor and student are equal friends; for Waghid there can be inequality of expertise among friends. In fact, the supervisor must have expertise and so act as a 'critical' kind of friend. However, Waghid does conceptualise the supervisory process as a relationship between (albeit unequal) friends. It is this part of his argument, equating the supervision relationship with friendship, that I think raises some problems in that it does not give sufficient recognition to the necessary element of professionalism.

Fataar on the students' own voice in an academic practice

Whereas Waghid focuses on cultivating mutuality, friendship and dialogical relationships, Fataar (2005) documents the delicate and difficult negotiating process between students' personal identities and the authoritative basis of the supervision relationship. He explores 'having to reconcile the personal, the political and the analytical' (Fataar 2005: 40) through an 'appropriate exercise of respect *and* authority' (Fataar 2005: 41, my emphasis). Here the central notion of authority underscores the professional element of the supervisory relationship. It addresses the second criterion of professions, i.e. professions involve significant theoretical expertise and practical competence. In short, teaching (and by implication, supervision) is a matter of intelligent practice based on theoretical expertise, sound practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and appropriate moral dispositions aligned to promoting the public good. The unease with acknowledging the centrality of authority in educational relationships is motivated partly by the anti-grand narrative stances driven by constructivism, the anti-elitism stances driven by democracy, and the anti-theory stances driven by post-modernism. I don't want to engage in criticism of these stances; suffice it to hold that meaningful understanding of social experiences must be based on informed conceptualisation by means of accepted ways of thinking and doing. What makes them accepted ways of thinking and doing (i.e. practices) is based on a shared historical development of rigorous argumentation and systematic testing through trial and error. That genuine authority is a product of particular cultural inheritance and context-sensitive sensibility rather than of socio-culturally dislocated universals does not necessitate that we throw out the idea of legitimate authority. On the contrary, we must hold on to the central notion of authority, based on legitimate intersubjective practices, if we are to make sense of educational relationships.

As Fataar notes, the process of his supervisory role was 'established, as it should, on the basis of the authority governed by the scholarly expertise of the supervisor. The nature of the relationship, however, is seldom stable, always somewhat tenuous, negotiated and re-negotiated' (Fataar 2005: 42). But in terms of what does the negotiation progress? What determines the limits of the negotiation? I want to argue that the accepted scholarly nature of the doctoral thesis determines the parameters of the negotiation. It is a negotiating process between the extent of the freedom of independent

expression and the requirements of a publically acknowledged doctoral thesis. Or another way of putting it, it is the balance between 'own voice' and the accepted public academic debate. For the supervisor, this poses the challenge of balancing the need to guide students' work on the one hand and allowing for freedom of expression and independent thought on the other.

But first I want to examine the notion of 'own voice'. The prominent space accorded to 'own voice' is due to a number of developments in how we view knowledge in general and the academe in particular. First, the distinctive difference between master's work and doctoral work is that the latter should contribute 'new knowledge' to the existing body of literature. It is this creative and innovative requirement that appeals directly to the doctoral student's own capacities, experiences and scholarly identity. It is not sufficient just to demonstrate knowledge of the existing body of literature; it must also make a progressive contribution to the ongoing academic debate. Second, this 'construction of new knowledge' finds a ready alignment with theories of constructivism and post-modernism whereby subjective experiences and interpretations are accorded central authority.⁵ Moreover, it is not surprising that the emphasis on acknowledging the centrality of own voice finds vocal resonance in feminist theories as well as anti-colonial or anti-Western notions of scholarship. Harrison et al. (2010: 194) document the 'self-constructed doctoral identities' of a group of women PhD students, their insistence on laying claim to their own areas of expertise (2010: 183) and their resistance to paternalistic notions of authority. Also, Grant (2010) illuminates the tricky relationship and tensions between indigenous doctoral students (Māori) and settler (Western) supervisors. In her study she notes that eight of the ten students undertook research that included Māori knowledge and wisdom. Apart from the practical and psychological challenges for these students of being and becoming Māori, there was also the deeper challenge of 'the dominance of Western disciplines and methodologies ... as the traditional landscape in which things and persons Māori have been objects of investigation rather than subjects who investigate' (Grant 2010: 116). Third, typically the more mature age of doctoral students makes the issue of 'own voice' more complex. Fataar (2005) notes the tricky personal dynamics in his

⁵ The 'new knowledge' required in a doctoral thesis I would argue is rather a matter of offering an innovative insight into an existing problem or formulating a hitherto unacknowledged problem.

supervisory relationship with the two students who were both older than he. They both had years of experience in teaching, developed strong normative stances with regard to education and wanted to engage with these directly in their theses. And fourth, the articulation and undermining of illegitimate power relations in academia creates legitimate space for 'own voice' and self-empowerment. Coupled with the central epistemological notion of 'self-reflexivity' as an authentic insight into social relationships and contexts, 'own voice' in certain theoretical approaches gains near sacrosanct status.

Own voice as own informed voice in the public academic debate

Although I do think that constructivist epistemologies are hugely problematic, I don't want to engage in a critical debate about them here.⁶ Suffice it to say that I think there are legitimate boundaries to 'own voice'. This, of course, does not detract from the importance of acknowledging the student's own voice in the supervisory relationship and ensuring its due space. But what are the limits of 'own voice'?

Elsewhere (Bak 2007) I have argued that a thesis demonstrates different kinds of knowledge which, in turn, warrant different levels of supervisor intervention. Whereas there are 'subjective' spaces in the thesis writing where the student's own ideas, own experiences, own interpretations are central, there are other parts in the thesis writing where close adherence to acknowledged scholarly writing and accepted ideas is central. Fataar (2005) documents his struggle to shift his students from passionately held normative stances deeply embedded in their senses of self and driven by an 'acting-upon-society' logic to a scholarly identity and a more analytical stance. With sensitive insight and due regard for their 'own voice', their own interests and issues that they wanted to investigate, Fataar as supervisor enables the shift in his two older students towards an increasingly scholarly identity, in which

⁶ To put my own epistemological cards on the table, I hold with an intersubjective 'Best Account Thus Far' notion of 'truth' as developed by MacIntyre (1984) and see advances in knowledge as constituted in a 'Better Account' where we can show that the move from A to B constitutes a gain epistemically (Taylor 1989). Add to this the Rortyan (1990a and b) notion that such an advance is non-teleological, is not driven by some forces 'outside' of human nature, but is always embedded in the larger context of a narrative of world history and literature, against the background of the world picture offered by the natural sciences.

both students manage to take a critical distance from their normative stances. In no way are their voices silenced in this process; instead they become increasingly *informed* voices as the students engage with seminal texts and critical arguments, and thus are strengthened. 'Both students have come to accept that doctoral study requires the assumption of an academic identity that enabled them to pose scholarly questions, and to write a proposal that, as artefact, signals the readiness of the students to become full participants in the doctoral writing community of practice' (Fataar 2005: 56). Herein we can see the limits imposed in doctoral work by i) assuming an academic identity, ii) the ability to engage in scholarly work, and iii) becoming recognised participants of an established academic community. What constitutes an 'academic identity' is not something that each individual decides on; there are inherited understandings, acknowledged institutions and legitimised practices that constitute the profession. Of course, this is subject to constant challenge and questioning, as it should be in order to ensure that it is as 'good as it can be', but that doesn't mean that the whole doctoral thesis is just what each individual conceives it to be. It would be tantamount to saying each rugby player can make up his own rules. This would not enable the game to proceed or, if it did, it would no longer be 'rugby'. Just as there can be innovative rugby moves (each game is different, each game has its own identity, or 'own voice'), so there are innovative insights and descriptions in doctoral work. The 'rules' of doctoral work are established by the academic profession and the criteria of professionalism in education and research. Becoming a recognised participant in the scholarly community means not so much developing an 'own voice' as developing 'an *informed* voice', that is, a voice informed by the accepted current academic debates and practices, while at the same time critically engaging with those very boundaries and conventions that constitute the profession. This is what Rorty (1990a) regards as 'individuation' and 'breaking the crust of convention'. Lastly, in line with the profession criterion of delivering some kind of important public service for civil necessities, I want to hold with Waghid and Fataar that the 'own voice' in doctoral work is necessarily bound by the aims of research, i.e. it should be aligned to social justice and truth.

Hugo on authority and induction

In their respective articles, Fataar (2005) and Hugo (2009) emphasise the authoritative element of the supervision process. As noted, Fataar traces how he gradually shifts his students from undertaking a project mainly rooted in personal passion to one that is academically rigorous. He achieves this through gradually developing a relationship of trust, but trust that is based on the students' acknowledgement of Fataar's authoritative understanding of issues in education and his scholarly position as a doctoral supervisor, albeit a novice one. Whereas Fataar focuses more on the authoritative role of the individual supervisor, Hugo thinks that what both Waghid and Fataar do not address is 'the very real need for a student to submit to the rules, processes and realities of academic communities as a *precondition* to finding their academic voice within it' (Hugo 2009: 705-706, my emphasis). Hugo's article focuses on the pivotal role of authority in the supervisory process, and regards the student as an apprentice who is being inducted through the supervisory process into the broader academic community. Hugo succeeds in adding a rich description of this induction process in which the supervisor 'is a gateway to a whole new set of practices and networks that move beyond the dialogic space between supervisor and student into the wider intellectual communities beyond them' (Hugo 2009 703). In describing the induction of selected master's students into a research programme, Hugo (2009: 706) highlights the necessary constraints that enabled these students' academic development:

They were informed that a massive amount of specialising work would be needed *before* they could begin their research and that their research question and methods would have to closely articulate with the programme. The idea that they were individual researchers gloriously creative engaged in the quest to answer big questions of education in their own voice was cut down from the beginning. They were apprentices involved in a process far larger than themselves and they would have to learn all the specialised languages and tools necessary to make a small contribution to the field. (my emphasis)

Although Hugo documents a master's student's induction into the research programme and so into the broader academic community, the same constraints, I would argue, apply to the doctoral process. Admittedly, these constraints are perhaps present to a lesser extent in the doctoral supervision process given that the doctoral student has *already* undergone a prior

induction through a successfully completed master's degree, but, I would argue, the same constraints are nevertheless constitutive of the academic induction at a higher level. For Hugo, authority is more prescriptive than it is for Fataar, for whom authority is linked to epistemic credibility, based on the professional authority negotiated in the actual supervision process. However, both regard the authority of the supervisor as grounded in the 'specialised explicit criteria' of research practice and the academic profession.

That the doctoral degree is a demonstration of proven epistemic credibility and expertise is not at issue. However, what is at issue is how the student should be helped by the supervisor to attain this and is the focus of Waghid's, Fataar's and Hugo's articles.

I want to agree with Hugo's insistence that a precondition to developing an informed voice within the academic community is to submit to the accepted practices and rules that constitute disciplinary communities. This coheres with Rorty's (1990a; 1990b) powerful argument that the process of education entails two distinct but equally necessary processes – socialisation and individuation. Rorty's distinction between socialisation and individuation also entails that conceptually the one must precede the other: socialisation is a matter of inculcating students into the prevailing ideas (whether these are true or not!) and individuation is the process by which students challenge the very ideas into which they have been socialised. Individuation involves inciting doubt, stimulating imagination and challenging the prevailing consensus. Socialisation must therefore precede individuation. As an academic apprentice, the master's (or doctoral) student is inducted into the rules, practices, literature, ongoing debates and conventions of the academic discipline. Without this grounding and familiarity of what the dominant arguments are (whether true or not), students cannot really engage convincingly and cannot fully participate as a critical-but-credible member of the community. One cannot agree or disagree with something unless one can demonstrate that one understands what one agrees or disagrees with. In other words, in order to have a legitimate own voice, it needs to be an informed voice. Coming to grips with seminal readings and the crucial texts that shape the debate is a hard, intensive task that calls for fortitude and commitment.

It is tempting to skip this hard first part and launch straight into one's own passionate story, but such a story would lack epistemic credibility.⁷

I also agree with Hugo's argument that the induction should be into a set of research tools, tools that will help students hone their own informed voice. These tools constitute an explicit set of standards that makes comparison between and assessment of research findings possible, and it is these sets of tools that students should be inducted into so that they can work, construct, evaluate, criticise and expand knowledge. Whereas Fataar got his students to read and engage with his own research, Hugo's students were inducted into an 'impersonal set of academic tools' which they could apply to their classroom observations, analyse and compare them (Hugo 2009: 707).

Through a rigorous application of the tools, students 'began to grasp what it means to become a researcher, of how to make the many shifts from concrete to abstract and back again' (Hugo 2009: 708). Documenting her own doctoral induction into a set of specialised tools, Van Schalkwyk (2010) documents her students' as well as her own 'rites of passage' in acquiring academic literacy in the discourse of their specific discipline and their ultimate attainment of a 'liberating literacy', one that enables them to be full participating members of a knowledge community, able to challenge, critique and shape the prevailing discourse into which they had been socialised. This induction, as both van Schalkwyk and Hugo document, is by no means a passive subjugation of the student to the daunting practices of the academic discipline; the acquisition of academic literacy and ultimately of a liberating literacy 'does not occur simply by virtue of one being exposed to the particular community of practice or disciplinary discourse. The need to be *actively engaged* in the discipline is a necessary *pre-condition*' (Van Schalkwyk 2010: 215, my emphases). And so, being an actively engaged apprentice, learning to wield the tools of the trade with competence, is the first necessary step to mastery and full membership of the guild that constitutes the publically acknowledged academic community.

⁷ I have often offended my students by stating that I am not interested in their opinions (something that they seem to have been encouraged to voice all throughout their education); what I am interested in are their *informed arguments*. That means strengthening their own voice by employing the conceptual tools of rigorous argumentation. That demands much more intellectual rigour and is, I hold, a pivotal tool in any substantive research.

Master's students are usually aware of their thesis being an initial demonstration of their prowess in using the tools in an appropriate piece of research (as in Brenda's case documented by Hugo). There is therefore, I surmise, less resistance at master's level to the authority of the supervisor than at a doctoral level. Students writing a PhD are usually more mature, more experienced and therefore, I surmise once again, more resistant to their 'apprenticeship' role (as in the cases documented by Fataar, Grant, van Schalkwyk and Harrison et al.). In addition, PhD students tend to view their thesis as the culmination of all their ideas, and a definitive demonstration of their independence as a researcher. Because of the prestige, as well as the resources invested into the thesis, it takes on momentous gravitas. It is seen as the identity badge of a scholar. For doctoral students then, the thesis tends to be regarded as an *end* point, the terminal degree. Officially there is no 'higher' degree than a PhD, but experienced researchers with PhDs know that the doctoral thesis is an *entry* into serious academic work, rather than a *terminus*. How many senior academics (those who tend to be supervisors) would write the same thesis as they did many years ago? How many of them still hold the same ideas as expressed in their theses? As Fataar notes, by the time he supervised his two students, he had moved on from the stance adopted in his PhD thesis. A colleague of mine once wryly observed, 'You only really learn to drive *after* you have your driver's licence'. So, the supervision process can perhaps be likened to that of helping to guide the learner-driver in steering and managing the research car she is driving.

Shared tools

Being inducted into a set of tools entails a notion of functionality – tools are put to use, be it to expand, explore, analyse, argue, assess, critique, etc. It points to the dynamic nature of the discipline in which the sets of ideas are constantly 'worked on'. But for Hugo the toolbox is a very specific one. Although he claims that the students were inducted into 'an impersonal set of academic tools' (Hugo 2009: 707), it turns out to be the esoteric toolbox of the Bernsteinian 'pocket of solidarity' (2009: 714). It is a research tradition with its own interaction ritual chains and energy. Hugo shows how through increasing contact with fellow Bernsteinians, Brenda increases her cultural capital and acquires a personal set of symbols that gives her membership into the Bernsteinian community in South Africa and, through that, membership

into the global network of Bernsteinians. Her induction as a member of the Bernstein community enabled her to meet virtually other followers, as well as the enemies and alliance partners of Bernsteinians. No doubt, with Brenda's Bernsteinian lineage established through the completion of her master's thesis, she will be regarded as an insider by the leading Bernsteinians in South Africa.

Certain individuals not only have been in direct contact with Bernstein and benefited from his direct attention, but are also at the forefront of the current community. This can be seen from the papers they have published in leading international and local journals, their direct contact and collaborations with leading international Bernsteinians, the place they are allocated at conferences and, most crucially, their ability to guide what form future research agendas are going to take. (Hugo 2009: 715)

Hugo gives a rich and compelling account of Brenda's growing academic strengths and argues convincingly for the case that the 'interpersonal relationship between supervisor/student must be combined with the wider intellectual network and community of practice that the supervisor is implicated in' (Hugo 2009: 712). But herein lie both the benefits as well as the *dangers* of such an induction. Whereas Hugo points to the gains made in the investment of Brenda's capital into a Bernsteinian venture, I think that Hugo doesn't sufficiently note the dangers and limitations of such an investment. There are two dangers I want to note: first, the danger that the Bernsteinian 'impersonal set of tools' are rather manifestations of a particular -ism, locking the student into a specific theoretical system; and second, that there are perhaps non-academic vested interests at play for the supervisor to strengthen the lineage by encouraging more students to be inducted into it.⁸

Tools that should not hold us captive⁹

Although Hugo doesn't use the term 'disciple', it seems as though Brenda's induction is like one at the feet of the guru. No doubt, judging from the description of his followers, Bernstein is a person with immense energy

⁸ In another article, Fataar (2006) traces how lineage networks operated inside the C2005 revision policy process.

⁹ Wally Morrow, quoting Wittgenstein, discusses how a picture can hold us captive: 'And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably' (Morrow 2007: 37).

and eminence, and the benefits of the lineage Brenda was working within have tangible outcomes (publishing within the community, externalling, conference presentations and, in turn, future supervisions of new entrants into the pocket of solidarity). I don't want to embark on a critique of Bernstein or to engage with its actual intellectual merits and demerits, but there is a substantial risk in Hugo's exhortation that students should choose their supervisors in terms of lineage, in terms of the cultural capital they can gain from the supervisor's 'insider' status, network opportunities and tangible benefits. This is, of course, the way most productive scholarly communities operate, but *how* are students, at the beginning of their research careers, to judge the worth of the lineage? How do students judge which 'pocket of solidarity' to join? This is a choice that has significant implications for future opportunities and will demand investment of resources, time, energy and allegiance to becoming an insider in a specific set of beliefs. And the more esoteric the tools within the set of beliefs, the more difficult it will be to 'escape'. The person with her immense investments in this set of beliefs is captive – to leave the community is to risk academic excommunication: 'sanctions against those who violate the symbols' (Hugo 2009: 713) and the ex-student turned 'heretic' (2009: 716). So the stakes are high: choose right and the resultant networks deliver benefits; choose wrong and opportunities are severely curtailed. But how is a student at the beginning of her research career to know whether she is making the right lineage choice?

Of course, one could check on the number of publications, conference contributions, intellectual eminence accorded in the general academic community of members of that particular lineage, but then, as Hugo notes, Brenda only later discovers, almost to her horror, the 'enemies' of Bernstein, those who dismiss the usefulness of his framework and toolset, and those who outright despise Bernsteinism. Fortunately for Brenda, it seems to be possible for erstwhile disciples to challenge the master, and to push the boundaries of his work. But she did not know this in advance and it is not difficult to think of -isms that do not create space for individuation, but lock the follower into a captive frame with its own language and its own set of tools that merely perpetuate the picture it has constructed.

And that entails the second risk: if one, later in one's career, recognises the limitations of the very picture one has spent one's professional life promoting, what price to acknowledge that it was a wrong choice? What

sacrifice to become an outsider, giving up on the network opportunities of publishing, externalling and presenting? Drawing on Collins's work, Hugo rightly sketches the vested interests that permeate academic work, but what Hugo does not elaborate on are the vested interests that can easily run *counter* to the intellectual enterprise: university departments that hire only adherents of a particular paradigmatic persuasion, a kind of laager mentality that fights outsiders and bolsters its numbers by encouraging students at the start of their research careers to become followers, with the promise of career benefits, a possible form of academic cronyism. In departments that are more theoretical (e.g. departments of Philosophy and Physics) the question of which 'camp' you are in is perhaps more pertinent than in departments that are more policy or project-orientated (e.g. Engineering, Actuarial Science, Medicine and Environmental Science). So, for example, hirings in Physics labs are typically along solidarity lines of either string theory, loop quantum gravity or causal set theory. In contrast, those hired into engineering departments and labs have demonstrated rigorous tools but are not clearly delineated into theoretical camps. Along this continuum, where do departments of Education fall?¹⁰ If along the continuum more towards the theoretical side, then which lineage you fall in becomes a crucial issue; whereas if departments of Education are more towards the policy-task-oriented side, the less of an issue it becomes. So, where one perceives Education departments to fall will determine whether you choose your supervisor mainly according to lineage or not. But that there is a continuum, that this accounts for the diagnosis of some of the tensions within education, and where it is normative on the continuum for Education to fall are subjects for another paper.

In summary, I have wanted to make three main points in this article as part of the ongoing debate about the nature of the supervision relationship: despite intimate, face-to-face, dialogical relationships between supervisor and student, the relationship should never lose sight of its professional nature.

¹⁰ For Rorty, clearly, Education falls more towards the policy-task oriented side of the spectrum. 'I am dubious about the relevance of philosophy to education ... Insofar as philosophy has a social function, it seems to me to be a therapeutic one – helping break the crust of convention. The principal instrument for breaking the crust of convention, however, is the suggestion of new, concrete alternatives. ... A good new way of setting college entrance exams or licensing teachers is the sort of thing that advances education' (Rorty 1990a: 41).

Moreover, our insistence on 'own voice' would be served better if referred to as 'own informed voice'. And third, decisions about lineage are fraught with risk for the student who, by her very position, cannot yet decide on the merit of the -ism into which she chooses to be inducted.

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Aslam Fataar's reply

Towards a 'pedagogy of supervision'

Brought together in this compilation Waghid, Hugo and Bak's articles are a gift. I experienced the inclusion of my article as part of this debate as a privilege and a responsibility. The debate was sparked by Hugo's response to unrelated articles by Waghid and myself. Bak's response highlighted the conceptual possibilities and limitations of the unfolding debate, which I believe invites further elaboration, conceptual clarification and empirical development. I concur that together the articles and the unfolding debate have opened a conceptual window onto the complexity of the pedagogical processes involved in the supervision of theses.

On reflection, my 2005 article was intended to bring the productive intellectual relationship constitutive of the thesis supervision process into view. It discussed the formative dynamics between myself as the supervisor and two doctoral students working on their doctoral proposals, which emphasised trust and authority-generating dimensions as central to engaging the students' initial personal stances and academic approaches to the impending study.

The two narratives of the identification dynamics involved in coming to acquire an academic comportment involved understanding their scholarly biographies and their initial approaches to their studies. What the article highlighted was the intellectual processing involved between myself and each of them, which enabled them to propose an academically suitable study. This process had to shift them from strongly held normative or political stances with regard their initial intellectual orientations towards taking on an appropriate analytical orientation necessary for proposing a viable academic study.

This necessarily involves a type of 'symbolic violence', i.e. intellectual engagement that persuades students to adopt an appropriate academic comportment necessary for doctoral work. The 'how' of supervision revolves around the nature of the intellectual dialogue that characterises the supervision relationship. It is the generation of academic authority as

foundational to such a relationship and the trust between supervisor and student that enable the student to take on a nascent scholarly comportment.

My article illustrated the specific epistemic dimensions of my engagements with the two students. It hopefully made the point that the exigencies associated with academic dialogue, in this case with students who were older than me and had more diverse professional experiences, were primary in facilitating their academic entrée. Care was taken not to mute their voices, nor to persuade them about the focus of their study. My job as supervisor was to cultivate an appropriate academic comportment and conceptual discourse through engaged dialogue that placed them in a position to propose a conceptually informed and analytically compelling study.

Waghid's evocative conceptualisation of supervision as involving a kind of critical friendship is certainly at play in these complex relationships. Bak's subtle distinction between 'own voice' and 'informed voice' helps us understand what is involved in developing a doctoral identity. Hugo's conceptual counter-balancing brings supervision modalities into view beyond the relational dimension in establishing the appropriate authoritative basis of productive supervision that my and Waghid's articles emphasised. Hugo takes us into the knowledge dimension of thesis work and the analytical tools central to the pursuit of novel conceptualisation. His portrayal of one of his student's academic immersion and apprenticing into an appropriate intellectual chain that secured an epistemic basis for her thesis work is an extremely important dimension of supervision work.

Together these positions constitute a 'chain of argument' that brings the complexities of thesis supervision into view and invites further debate and development. Relationality, dialogicality and epistemic induction are constitutive dimensions of the supervision relationship, although they are not exhaustive. I am currently interested in the pedagogical engine, largely unexplored in the literature, of the supervision relationship – that is, the nature and complexity of the pedagogical or knowledge transfer practices involved in supervision.

So I end off my reply by calling for a 'pedagogy of supervision' in reference to the knowledge or scholarly recontextualising practices at the 'point' of supervision. The supervisor is meant to be a practising academic actively involved in research and publication. This is what enables him or her to

be a supervisor of research-based theses. It is his or her research expertise that provides the necessary condition for successful supervision, but that is not sufficient. What is required is the cultivation of pedagogical awareness, expertise and skills that enable pedagogical transfer during the supervision process.

A ‘pedagogy of supervision’ involves working with scholarship identity processes, based on an acute awareness of, and sensitivity about, the ontological dimension of doing research. This is founded on the idea that assuming an epistemic identity involves deep questions of being and becoming, and alertness to the student’s conceptual capacities, learning styles and modes of intellectual processing. Productive thesis pedagogy leverages these as assets worthy of working through and building on, as opposed to a deficit view of students in need of unidirectional advice and instruction. It is to conceptual elaboration and empirical exemplification of such a pedagogy of supervision that I think the debate on the modalities of effective supervision should now turn.

Yusef Waghid's reply

On a politics of friendship, scepticism and hatred of democracy: In defence of robust postgraduate student supervision

Some of the arguments produced in this volume teeter on the edge of analytical exhaustion in the sense that friendship, it seems, is deemed as inappropriate when attending to some of the intellectual demands and the professional autonomy and integrity associated with postgraduate student supervision. In this brief response, I once again depart from the ideas of my critics, in particular Nelleke Bak and Wayne Hugo, who both articulate somewhat truncated positions in order to undermine my use of friendship in explicating what student supervision could entail. I offer three arguments in defence of friendship in postgraduate student supervision that could possibly countenance their views: firstly, friendship implies cultivating a responsible relationship between supervisor and student that can promote what Bak refers to as 'accountable professionalism'; secondly, friendship can engender sceptical moments that would 'induct students into an academic community', as is not recognised and discounted by Hugo; and, thirdly, friendship can be profoundly 'authoritative', as Fataar would want supervision to be.

Firstly, drawing on Jacques Derrida's (1997) *Politics of Friendship*, friendship is the act of loving (*philia*), rather than letting oneself be loved or being loved – what he refers to as inducing love (Derrida 1997: 8). Of course, it is possible that one can be loved without knowing it. But it is impossible to love without knowing it. Derrida (1997: 9) makes the claim that 'the friend is the person who loves (and declares his or her love) before being the person who is loved'. And if one thinks of friendship, one is to start with the 'friend-who-loves', and not with the 'friend-who-is-loved' (Derrida 1997: 9). Thus, when supervisors consider themselves as friends of students, they willingly declare their love to one another to 'the limit of its possibility', that is, being accountable in a professional way for their learning (Derrida 1997: 12). I feel myself loving my students when I care for them in a way that evokes their potentialities in order that they come up with possibilities I might not even

have thought of. Without being affectionate towards them, I cultivate in them the capacity to reach their own justifiable conclusions to which they are to be held accountable by and to others – that is, they have developed the ability to evaluate, modify or reject their own practical judgments. Only then can I consider myself as a ‘friend-who-loves’, since I do not expect to be loved in return; that is, when students reach their own justifiable conclusions about educational issues, they do so without having to please me – without loving me in return. Similarly, when students come up with sufficiently good reasons for acting and imagining alternative possibilities so as to be able to rationally re-educate themselves about educational issues, without having to please me, they can be said to be ‘friends-who-love’. It is this idea of friendship, which can go some way towards sustaining a sense of professionalism and accountability in students, that Bak finds so unconvincing.

Secondly, drawing on Stanley Cavell (1997), particularly on his ideas on ‘living with scepticism’, postgraduate student supervision ought to be an encounter framed by scepticism. Supervising students sceptically might engender moments of acknowledging humanity within the Other, finding attachment to the Other’s points of view with a readiness for departure, and showing responsibility to the Other. Central to one’s connection with the Other is the view that one has to acknowledge humanity in the Other, the basis for which action lies in oneself: ‘I have to acknowledge humanity in the other, and the basis of it seems to lie in me’ (Cavell 1979: 433). One’s friendship with postgraduate students ought to be shaped by an acknowledgement that they should be considered as fellow human beings. In acknowledging others as human beings worthy of respect, one should simultaneously acknowledge oneself as a person who should exercise respect. Moreover, Cavell (1979: 179) makes the point that ‘the authority one has, or assumes, in expressing statements of initiation ... is related to the authority one has in expressing or declaring one’s promises or intentions’. So when students are supervised they are initiated into a form of life intended by the supervisor. This also implies that students can subvert these forms of life as they wish. They may be transformed by the practice of supervision and also subvert this practice in order to give themselves other opportunities – such as those unintended actions of the practice. Likewise, in demonstrating one’s responsibility towards others one immediately acknowledges one’s capacity for intimacy with others – thus limiting one’s idiosyncratic privacy. It is for this reason that Cavell (1979: 463) claims that ‘human beings do not necessarily desire

isolation and incomprehension, but union or reunion, call it community'. Our private actions may lead to a betterment of our communal actions – a situation that can only enhance 'the academic community' into which Hugo contends students should be inducted.

Finally, Jacques Rancière's (2006) challenge of those hegemonic and totalitarian institutions (even democratic ones) in *Hatred of Democracy* offers a more positive way to think about 'authority' in postgraduate student supervision. For Rancière, unlike my esteemed colleagues in this contribution, a democratic encounter (I would argue postgraduate student supervision) is sporadic in the sense that students from 'outside', who are considered as less authoritative, can disrupt the perceived practices of supervision in the name of equality. This implies that students are not supervised on the basis that they are 'outside' such practices and need to be included under the authoritative voice of the supervisor. Instead, following Rancière, a supervisor acts authoritatively when she creates learning opportunities for students in terms of which they can play a role in interrupting the chain of reasons and consequences, causes and effects that shape their learning as they embark on authoring texts. As learners they are encouraged to create new forms of learning and to discover modes of action to make things happen because, in Rancièrian terms, they (the students) have an equal ability to speak, understand and redefine the practice of student supervision.

Only then does student supervision have the makings of a robust pedagogical encounter.

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Wayne Hugo's reply

Supervision response

Before I get into my own reaction I would like to comment on the process that has unfolded and finally resulted in this compilation of articles on supervision and assorted responses. When writing 'networks' back in 2008, I was concerned that our own community of education academics were not taking each others' work seriously enough. We were not referencing each other or engaging in debate with each other in a sustained way, and I saw my paper on supervision as stimulating a nascent debate that existed between Waghid and Fataar's work. I set up my piece as a spicy addition that would stimulate discussion, but did not really expect it to bite. That it did so is largely due to Fataar taking the process seriously and driving it to the point we are at now, and I would like to convey my appreciation for his sterling efforts in this regard.

My reaction is not protective; I do not want to defend my paper or attack the other respondents (although there will be elements of this in what follows). Nor do I want to take the middle line where some golden mean of supervision is looked for by synthesising the papers (although I will do some of this as well). I want to use Occam's razor, as Bak does, to get at a minimal conceptual set that has manifested itself in the collection. That said, I do not want to step away from the spice of academic life offered in the chance to respond, so there will be some sharpness.

Here is the question that interests me as I read the collection: what basic conceptual tool set can we use to illuminate the contributions by Waghid, Fataar, Hugo, Bak, and Bitzer; and what blindspots are still being shown that can take us forward in our attempt to understand the complexities of academic supervision in South Africa.

The supervision relationship works with two basic dimensions that are deeply intertwined but can be analytically separated – the normative 'ought' and the epistemic and the empirical 'is'. They are intertwined because it is in the daily routine relationship between supervisor and student that reasons are given

and taken, empirical reality is interrogated, validity claims survive or fall. The deliberative relationship produces an epistemic effect. It strikes me, as I read through the responses, that the debate seems to have focused powerfully on the normative at the cost of the empirical and the epistemic, and I find this strange, given that the relationship between the supervisor and student centres around knowledge. In the space of the normative, I feel that Bak has got far closer to what the regulative relationship is between supervisor and student than Waghid, in her pithy statement that the object of love is not the student but love of intellectual work itself. By focusing on Aristotle's intellectual and practical virtues, she gets the regulative focus correct – it is virtues alright, but *intellectual* virtues. It is not that Waghid is wrong about the beauties of friendship in supervision, only that his focus is wide-angled rather than sharply defined. This allows him to point out that friendship is able to include an authority relation, accountability, professional mutual caring, and scepticism. He can do this in part because friendship is a wide and inclusive relationship, whereas I prefer a tighter focus for supervision relationships. Friendship does not give the analytical focus needed to get hold of the particular nature of the supervision relationship. Friendship appears to me as a larger and somewhat tangential set in which the supervision relation resides as a problematic subset. Bak shows this up quite clearly, I think, through her placing of supervision relationships within the broader frame of intellectual virtue. I immediately felt this was a helpful larger frame because it got at what the *supervision relationship* is about by emphasising the *supervision* part rather than the *relationship* part of supervision relationship. But if you look carefully, her focus is on the *virtue* of theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom, not what theoretical and practical wisdom actually are in their epistemic purity. Sure, the supervisor and the student must care deeply about the truth, but, just as importantly, they should get at the truth. I can care about the truth and not get it. She does the same thing when she focuses on the ethically appropriate supervisory relationship resting on four *ethical* principles. I like these principles, they get to the normative heart of the supervisory relationship far more accurately than friendship and forgiveness do, but the epistemic silence is deafening. When I read through the various responses, I see strong debate on the normative dimension of the supervision relationship, but I see little on the epistemic/empirical practices themselves. This absence surprises me, because it is precisely what I tried to point to in my article, and when my article gets picked up on, it is in terms of its

normative dimensions (authority and lineage of supervisor, etc.), not its attempt to delineate what it actually means for a student and supervisor to chase an empirical detail all the way from its natural home into the epistemic confines of a research thesis.

This is not to say we should not focus on the *relationship* part, only that we should be careful how we do it. *Human* relationships is a bigger set than *supervisor* relationships, so we have to be careful about losing focus, but it is a more accurate larger set than ‘friendship’, which I see as a still useful but more tangential set. Expanding your focus outwards is not necessarily a bad thing, as it brings broader dynamics into focus, but you have to get the expansion right. So what are the basic kinds of human relationships that are possible and does this shed some light on supervision? Well, let us go to the specialists who have spent their academic lives working on this dimension and see what they have to say. Alan Fiske (1991) is one such academic, and he argues that people use just four fundamental models of human relational dynamics: communal sharing (cs), authority ranking (ar), equality matching (em) and market pricing (mp). Allow me to put these four into supervisor relationship terms. With communal sharing you open out your resources to others in a shared and intimate way, where you do not ask what the other can do for you, but what you can do for others without keeping score. In many ways this is where Waghid locates the supervision relationship. With authority ranking there is an asymmetric relationship, with the supervisor taking on a pastoral responsibility and the student deferring to and respecting the superior position of the supervisor in exchange for guidance and induction into how knowledge and the academic community works. Fataar tracks the tension between these two dimensions with characteristic insight. With equality matching (em) there is a sensitivity to how hierarchical relationships unbalance the supervising relationship and a strong attempt is made to establish balance, especially as the relationship comes to term, and the student takes on the mantle of independent researcher doing her own work in her own voice. Finally, with market pricing (mp) there is a recognition that different supervisors bring with them different values that are socially and intellectually meaningful within the academic community. To be supervised by Bernstein or Habermas or Derrida brings with it specific values and networks, and this dimension of the supervision relationship cannot be ignored. Fiske goes on to point out that we tend to work with all four kinds of relationships at the same time, with all sorts of combinations

possible. These can be both productive and problematic. When a student emphasises communal sharing over the other three types of relationships, for example, and assumes that his supervisor is a 'commons' to be used at any time or place, then difficulties set in; or when a student refuses to let go of the authority ranking and step into a more equal relationship; or when a student chases market pricing at any cost and finds herself with a supervisor who is so famous and busy that he does not care a whit for his minions of PhD students.

Notice that the work I had to do to configure this broader 'relationship' set to its contained partner 'supervision relationships' was minimal. There is a natural fit that I feel helps to illuminate some of the basic relationship patterns of supervision. Because it is a broader set, it is not going to get you into the specific details of supervision, but it is an orienting device that helps you walk into the terrain with some analytical purchase. But that is about as much as these relationship types can do. To take things further you would need to explore the complex social, moral and political world these relationships breathe in. The way these relationships actually work is embedded within particular force fields that shape and twist the relationships in particular ways, and it is here that Waghid and Fataar show their characteristic strengths. For all my criticism of Waghid in this response, what rises above it is my respect for his serious engagement with what it means to engage with a supervision relationship in a post-apartheid landscape that twists the relationship in all sorts of difficult and complex ways. It is in this ravaged, yet beautiful, landscape that friendship and forgiveness as a part of the supervision relationship make sense, and this is why I continue to engage with his work, even when he continually seems to work obliquely. When you take the twisted landscape we work with into account, then suddenly the work of Waghid shifts right back to centre stage.

If the analytical 'ought/is' double and the broader 'relationship' set give my first two productive sets behind this collection on supervision, then different types of research focus give my third. With one particular PhD student of mine I have worked hard on shifting her vision of the world and encouraged her to see the domain of her research in a completely transformed way. I used Deleuze as the transformative device to get her into a process dynamic where flows and connections link together in fruitful ways. I focused on her as a 'knower' and her PhD is now structured around how this fundamental

shift in perspective has affected her topic. It's a very personal thing, to work on someone's vision of the world, as it changes the core of their being. It strikes me, as I read Waghid, Fataar and Bak, that this is their preferred mode. But there are many PhD supervision relationships that focus strongly on the knowledge component rather than the knower. Often these are in the harder sciences, and there is a reason for this. The links and levels of the sciences are explicit and simple and can be tracked all the way through. The task of the supervisor is to ensure that all the protocols have been rigorously followed, that each fact and connection is properly established, and that all the previous work already done on the topic (which is also explicit and clear) is acknowledged and built on. This is a very different level of focus and it has profound implications for the supervision relationship. The job of the supervisor is less to help the student interrupt a specific way of seeing the world and more to ensure that the correct lines are rigorously chased. To gain a more complete account of supervision relationships, this 'knowledge/knower' couplet needs more airtime than it gets in this collection.

The fourth (and final) emergent dimension that helps me make sense of the various contributions is the boundary strength of the relationship between supervisor and student. It is unclear to me that the various contributions overestimate the role of supervisors in postgraduate student success, as argued in the postscript, it is more like this is not their focus – they have delimited their focus to get at a particular logic that is not about postgraduate student success but about the relationship between student and supervisor. I would have framed the debate differently by pointing to the boundary lines of the debate and showing how to open or solidify them. There are internal lines, where you can strongly draw a circle around the student or the supervisor in their own terms. Then there is the boundary between the student and the supervisor and how this relationship opens and solidifies depending on all sorts of variables that range around type of relationship, type of research focus, type of personalities involved, etc. This boundary opens out to a larger set of networks that work with peer group cohorts, other academics, etc., and these boundaries can be open or solid, informal or formal, implicit or explicit.

The four areas explored above do two things for me. They help me to make sense of the emergent debate on supervision relationships and they point to where the emphases have fallen too strongly on one side at the cost of

other dimensions. We need to attend to the empirical and epistemological constraints of the supervision relationship as well as its normative dimension; the multiple set of supervision relationship types that are twisted by the complex force field they exist within; the different types of research foci and how they impact on supervision; and the shifting boundaries of supervision that widen and contract, open and solidify, depending on the level of focus and nature of the boundary.

The person I experience as my double in this endeavour is Aslam Fataar. When reading his work on supervision (and his other writing) I experience someone coming from a very different starting position but working towards the same attempt at a complex and nuanced description of a complex and nuanced field. Fataar works from the deep well of turning and training subjectivity towards specialisation, whereas I tend to start from the conditions of knowledge and work towards its impact on subjectivity. Even when dealing with relationships I tend to look for a theoretical simplification that gives me analytical purchase, as can be seen with my use of Fiske in this piece. Fataar starts with the phenomenological and hermeneutic experience of engaging with the depths of another human being and the art of turning subjectivity 'towards the light', as it were. I would like to briefly sketch where I see productive twinning of these two positions, captured in the well-known tensions in the concept of 'subjectivity': where you are both *subjected to* forms of supervisory authority and knowledge protocols and an active *subject* who has the capacity to act critically; where the *institutional* and the *intimate* levels of supervision meet; where the *external* demand of knowledge and the *internal* subjectivity of a knower find a productive boundary; where the *macro* and the *micro* tangle. We both want to get to a critical space where we open out the internal critical capacities of our students and develop a societal critique of the current state of educational affairs, and we both want to do this in a way that takes the rigours of description seriously, only I tend to start at the knowledge pole and Fataar at the knower. I find this kind of pulsating star productive.

So I would like again to thank Aslam Fataar for taking this process to where it currently is. The kind of academic leadership he is showing in this process needs to be celebrated, for it is not only about taking research and debate on supervision relationships to another level that is at stake, but how we engage

with each other as an academic community and build our own capacities and relationships.

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Nelleke Bak's reply

Supervision, intellectual virtues and professionalism

'You like potato and I like potahto,
 You like tomato and I like tomahto,
 Potato, potahto, tomato, tomahto!
 Let's call the whole thing off!'
 (Ira & George Gershwin)

It may at first appear that Waghid's interpretation of the nature of the supervisory relationship as one of friendship is quite different to mine as one characterised in terms of accountable professionalism. However, despite the seeming differences, there is much overlap. We both hold that the following are central to the relationship between supervisor and student: cultivating a mutually responsible relationship; students being accountable for their learning and supervisors accountable for their input; developing students' capacities to reach independent justifiable conclusions through a process of sceptical moments; inducting students into an academic community; and acceptance and exercise of appropriate authority.

In order to realise these requirements, the supervisory relationship is usually an intimate, one-on-one, fairly extended interchange between two parties sharing a common good. Inevitably, for such a relationship to be productive, it needs to proceed in a climate of mutual trust, mutual respect (which, by definition, includes 'acknowledging the humanity of the Other'), shared activity and mutual caring.

The point of difference between Waghid and me is this: it is the constitutive element of mutual caring that induces Waghid to interpret the nature of the supervisory relationship in terms of 'friends-who-love'. I, in turn, argue that the supervisory relationship should be interpreted in terms of professional mutual caring, and so it does not necessarily entail being friends. In fact, in

my original article to which Waghid responds, I go further to say that being friends would perhaps be inappropriate between supervisor and student.

The premises of my argument are conceptual. First, I hold that although mutual caring is a necessary condition for friendship, friendship is not a necessary condition for mutual caring. And since the supervisory relationship is a mutually caring professional relationship, it does not necessarily entail friendship. One cannot conceive of genuine friends who don't care about the other's wellbeing, but one can conceive of relationships – such as one between architect and client, or conductor and musician, or swimming coach and athlete – where parties care about each other without necessarily being friends. These are professional relationships where the expertise and training of the one guides the choices and actions of the other so as to reach optimal outcomes. Of course, such relationships often do not actually express mutual caring, but tend to be unfulfilling and to lead to mediocre or disappointing outcomes.

Second, whereas Waghid draws on Derrida's concept of mutual caring which entails the notion of loving friends, I want to draw on Aristotle's notion of virtues, in particular intellectual virtues and excellence. In that way, for me the supervisory relationship is still characterised by professional mutual caring about a joint project, but without invoking loving friendship. I want to focus on how Aristotle's interpretation of intellectual virtues can be a fruitful framework for thinking about the 'proper' supervisory relationship. But let me first give a brief summary of Aristotle on intellectual virtue.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle identifies two kinds of virtues: intellectual and practical. Intellectual virtues comprise theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) and practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). Theoretical wisdom is being able to think well about scientific matters, whereas practical wisdom is being able to think well about practical matters. 'Intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires expertise and time), while practical virtue comes about as a result of habit (*ethos*)' (1103a, 14-17).

Virtues are teleological, i.e. are aimed at a good. 'Every art and every enquiry, and similarly every action and choice, is thought to aim at some good' (1094a, 1-2).

But aiming at the good entails both action and inclination. To be virtuous is not only to *act* virtuously but also to *feel* appropriately virtuous. So, a

productive supervisory relationship would entail not only both parties fulfilling their tasks and responsibilities, but also both feeling that what they are doing is worth doing well. Furthermore, for Aristotle, to act virtuously is not to act against one's inclinations; instead, it is to act in line with those inclinations that have been formed through the cultivation of the virtues. So, virtuous or 'proper' action by the supervisor is not merely to correct her student's writing and guide his thinking, but to do so because she is inclined to embody intellectual virtue. In other words, both supervisor and student need to care about what they are doing and to embody habits and promote conditions that will fulfil the mutual aim of producing a good thesis. This for me is professional mutual caring. If there is talk of 'love', then I would perhaps venture that the object of love is not the student or the Other; rather it is love for the intellectual work itself. That is, the supervisor, and through following her example the student as well, should care deeply about the truth and the importance of 'getting it right'.

Third, I want to hold with Occam's razor. This means that if we can give an adequate explanation of something, we should aim at giving the simpler explanation rather than the more complex one. I trust that by giving an outline of what the nature of the supervisory relationship is in terms of professional mutual caring – for each other and the joint task at hand – I do not have to appeal to the complex concept of inducing love among friends.

It seems as though the recent development of ethically appropriate supervisory relationships in Psychology is also able to capture the professional basis of such relationships without invoking notions of loving friendships. The Canadian Psychological Association recently drew up and adopted a comprehensive set of guidelines that delineates an ethically appropriate (clinical) supervisory relationship and that assists both supervisors and supervisees in maintaining productive working relationships (Pettifor et al. 2011). The guidelines rest on four ethical principles. Principle I, Respect for the Dignity of Persons, calls upon supervisor and supervisees to demonstrate respect, courtesy and understanding of each other in their respective roles. Principle II, Responsible Caring, requires supervisors to evaluate potential harms and benefits to those who are directly and indirectly affected by their actions. Principle III, Integrity in Relationships, advises on how to establish trust. Supervisors are advised to maintain a high level of openness, objectivity, honesty and straightforwardness. And Principle IV, Responsibility to Society, highlights

the supervisor's responsibility not only to the student but also to society more broadly by ensuring that students are provided with high-quality training and that the public investment in such training has social benefits. All four of these principles capture the mutual caring and professionalism that I think hold for supervisory relationships in general, without having to appeal to friendship.

In summary, in an ideal supervisory relationship, both parties care about performing their respective functions, and they are inclined to perform those functions with excellence (*aretē*). Not only are supervisor and student able to think well about scientific and practical matters; both also want to do so because they feel that it is an important and worthwhile function, not only for themselves but also for the broader society. Waghid's potato and my potato agree on this.

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Postscript

Overestimating the role of supervisors in postgraduate student success? A literature perspective

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Abstract

The role of postgraduate supervisors is deemed crucial in postgraduate study success and excellence. As a result, the literature reports on studies that point to postgraduate education which is typically explored in terms of students' perceptions of their relationship with their supervisors or the perceived quality, concern and usefulness of supervision. However, several studies also indicate that students differ in their backgrounds, ambitions and expectations, creating differences in their needs in relation to supervision. The literature further indicates that both commitment from candidates themselves and support from their supervisors are needed to achieve progress in postgraduate studies. Other issues besides commitment and support that are associated with study progress are, for example, financial provision, structured coursework and other forms of learning as well as addressing research uncertainties. Support from peers seems particularly important, both for study progress and research progress, thereby lending support to recent findings and questioning the heavy emphasis placed on the role of supervisors and candidate-supervisor relationships in typical apprenticeship models of supervision.

Introduction

In the articles constituting this publication, Waghid firstly draws on theoretical work from Arendt's understanding of action and Greene's view of the role of imagination by critically exploring moments in teaching and learning that point towards imaginative action. One of the breakthroughs he records is how to act imaginatively through exploring possibilities and how forgiveness can be harnessed to stir postgraduate students to reach out on their own initiatives and how to engage them in critical thinking and shared dialogue.

Fataar, again, focuses on the interpersonal and formative dynamics involved in PhD proposal supervision processes by providing a reflective account of supervisory experiences with two doctoral students. He points to the authoritative basis upon which supervisory relationships are founded, negotiated and substantiated. A key to these processes seems to be an awareness of the ways in which students' personal identities initially informed their respective approaches to doctoral study. He consequently shows how shifts in personal approaches enabled doctoral students to identify research foci and to pose acceptable sets of research questions. The development of his own reflexivity about his authority as a doctoral supervisor is deemed of major importance in the process.

Hugo, referring to the contributions by Waghid and Fataar with their accounts of the dialogic space between supervisor and student, sees these accounts as needing to be supplemented by a discussion of broader academic communities of practice that postgraduate students should be inducted into. As an illustration, he traces the apprenticeship of one master's student into an academic community and her involvement within intellectual networks and their academic practices when inducted into the peculiar rigours of postgraduate research.

Then, referring to all three of the former articles, Bak examines claims that may hinder supervisory processes rather than facilitate them. These include claims that the relationship between supervisor and student should be a friendship; that students writing their theses should demonstrate 'own voice'; and that students should choose supervisors on the authority of their academic lineage. She argues that although these claims are fruitful, one

needs to be aware of their inherent risks and of the appropriate limits of the key concepts posed by these accounts.

The argumentative trajectories in all of these papers point to the important role of supervision experiences and their possibilities of guiding postgraduate students towards academic excellence and success in their studies. The value of these arguments is therefore obvious, as academic excellence and success are high on the teaching and research agendas of universities. However, it may be that a possible gap exists in all of these arguments, namely the assumption that supervisors, the support they provide and the guidance they aspire to are the prime determinants of postgraduate learning and success.

Exploring the literature on postgraduate education

Postgraduate education support is typically explored in the literature in terms of students' perceptions of their relationship with their supervisors or the perceived quality, concern and usefulness of supervision (Girves and Wemmerus 1988). One of the main issues associated with degree progress and doctoral student satisfaction is often seen as supervisor involvement, as supervisors are expected to provide advice, take a personal interest in candidates, actively promote the careers of students and refrain from using students as cheap labour (Zhao et al. 2007). Also, students' development and promoting their socialisation into the academic community are mostly seen as part of supervisors' expected roles (Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain 1983; Johnson et al. 2000). Typical supervisory roles are therefore geared towards promoting avenues to the broader research community (Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain 1983; Petersen 2007), cultivating students' researcher identities (Allen-Collinson 2004; Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2005) and setting examples themselves as scholars. Previous research also explored candidates' choices of supervisors and supervisor behaviour (Zhao et al. 2007), supervisor quality (Girves and Wemmerus 1988) and different issues regarding help and hindrance (Kluever 1997) as factors associated with degree progress and postgraduate study satisfaction.

However, research into postgraduate education also indicates that students differ in their backgrounds, ambitions and expectations, creating differences in their needs for supervision (Martinsuo and Turkulainen 2011). Where some studies point to a need to match students' expectations with those of supervisors (Golde 1998, 2005) or the relationship between students and

the supervisors (Frischer and Larsson 2000), others emphasise the nature of these interactions (Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain 1983; Ferrer de Valero 2001; Seagram et al. 1998). For instance, a study by Armstrong (2004) on student-supervisor relationships in business schools in the United Kingdom showed that supervisors' cognitive styles had significant effects on students' estimates of supervision quality and how they expected to perform in their studies. Armstrong's findings indicated that it is not supervisor behaviour as such that explains study progress, but its interplay with the student's expectations and characteristics. As supervisor support often focuses on hands-on advising on research, doctoral students in particular may also need other forms of support. For instance, American doctoral education processes use committees with multiple supervisors for each doctoral student, whereas many European systems prove to be less formal.

In South Africa, doctorates have traditionally been earned in dyadic master-apprenticeship relationships rather than within structured programmes with cohorts of candidates. Current trends worldwide increasingly point in the direction of structured doctoral programmes, including multiple supervisors (i.e. committees rather than a single advisor and often with international members) as well as coursework requirements (Nerad and Trzyna 2008; Teichler and Yagci 2009). For example, one or more additional advisors or supervisors may be assigned to complement the primary supervisors (Malfroy 2005; Martinsuo 2007a). Recent research suggests that support from both peers (Boud and Lee 2005; Lizzio and Wilson 2006) and employers in the case of industry or professionally based students (Malfroy and Yates 2003; Martinsuo 2007a) plays important roles in degree progress. Martinsuo's (2007a) study with part-time doctoral students in particular has shown that employer support is central, especially when complemented by students' own skills and readiness for postgraduate studies.

Supervisory support can be supplemented by other forms of support in different ways. This includes the usefulness of help, assistance and encouragement received from multiple sources (supervisors, peer groups and employers). The value of multiple sources of support has been pointed out in various qualitative studies on doctoral processes (Allen-Collinson 2004; Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2005; Malfroy 2005; Malfroy and Yates 2003), but in large-scale survey-based studies these different forms of support are

often studied separately, which does not reveal the real benefits of multiple sources of support.

The effect of different forms of support can be associated with different levels of success criteria, thus giving little indication of the relative effect of these different support forms. Although all forms of support are likely to have positive effects on progress in doctoral studies, some may have stronger effects than others. To gain a holistic picture of the effects of different forms of support, they need to be examined simultaneously, as was recently the case in an elaborate study by Martinsuo and Turkulainen (2011).

Martinsuo and Turkulainen (2011) investigated the effect that students' personal commitment and various forms of support have on progress in doctoral studies. 'Personal commitment' was assessed as goal commitment, time commitment and plan commitment, whereas 'support' was assessed in terms of supervisor support, peer support and employer support. They analysed progress in terms of completing coursework and progress in terms of research separately in order to find potential differences in promoting progress in both of these areas.

Their results show clearly that commitment and support have an effect on progress in both coursework and research, but the effects are different for different dependent variables. Where plan commitment and peer support, as well as goal commitment and supervisor support, jointly promote progress in coursework, time commitment and peer support, as well as time commitment and supervisor support, jointly promote progress in research. Martinsuo and Turkulainen thereby contribute to research on degree success (also see Girves and Wemmerus 1988; Golde 1998, 2005; Green 2005; Ives and Rowley 2005; Martinsuo 2007a, b) by revealing the different logics through which study progress and research progress are achieved with support and students' personal commitment. Their study has also shown that supervisor support is but *one* contributing factor of study success and satisfaction and can therefore not be elevated to the level of the most important contributor.

Conclusion

Overall, the results from Martinsuo and Turkulainen's study have shown that both commitment from candidates themselves and support from their supervisors are needed to achieve progress in doctoral studies. These results

offer new empirical evidence on models for degree progress (also see Girves and Wemmerus 1988), particularly in the context of doctoral programmes in academic, industry and professional-based doctorates. Their results also indicate that other issues besides commitment and support should be further investigated to discover further variables associated with progress, for example financial provision, structured coursework and other forms of learning as well as addressing research uncertainties. Support from peers was revealed as a particularly important factor, for both study progress and research progress, thereby lending support to other recent findings (Boud and Lee 2005).

These findings and in particular those of Martinsuo and Turkulainen have several important implications for supervision and the roles of supervisors. *First*, to advance students' progress, formal study planning should be encouraged. In addition to the development of a personal study plan, some formal evaluation processes should be used to check whether students proceed according to plan. *Second*, formation of peer and discussion groups should be encouraged and supported because it seems that peer support plays a strong role in supporting progress in both coursework and research. Supervisors could take the initiative in forming peer groups and emphasise their importance to new candidates. *Third*, although supervisory support is important, its benefits cannot be achieved if the student is not personally committed. It seems a waste of supervisory resources if students are not fully committed to carrying out doctoral studies. This strengthens the idea that only students who can commit full-time to their doctoral studies should be accepted to doctoral programmes in the first place, and that supervisory support should be directed at these students in particular. And, *finally*, for progress in research, time commitment matters and this needs to be made clear to new doctoral students: no matter what supervisory support students receive, to progress in research they also need to be willing and able to devote significant amounts of time to their studies.

One may finally say that although the roles and relationships forged by supervisors and their candidates are overtly important in postgraduate study quality and success, caution must prevail in overemphasising them and in the face of strong evidence that more complex sets of factors prevail.

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The Department of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University presents this occasional publication on the topic of thesis supervision as a way of bringing our academic labour in this hitherto 'invisible' area into academic view. We present this compilation as a 'strand of argument' or a 'self-referenced' conversation that problematises key aspects embedded in thesis supervision. The book features chapters by departmental members and three academic friends, which together provide a rich and compelling line of argument worthy of careful study, critique and elaboration. The four articles presented here and the replies by each author, plus the postscript, have the objective of exemplifying responsible and rigorous debate on thesis supervision on the one hand, while providing space for conceptual clarification and elaboration on the other. We suggest that the collective writings in this occasional publication invite engagement and critique, and it is to such an endeavour that we now invite readers of this publication to respond.

In bringing to the fore different perspectives on thesis supervision, this publication provides the academy with a critical resource for reflection on what constitutes best practice in postgraduate supervision. As such it represents a significant addition to the literature on postgraduate supervision while at the same time challenging academics to reflect on their own practice in supervising postgraduate students.

Professor Philip Higgs

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This book is the first that have put to formal debate that which most of us as researchers had been troubled with. The debates presented in this book are challenging, thought provoking, and serve as an inspirational base for the community of researchers to contribute towards and develop on substantially. It is timely, as most institutions of higher learning are expanding their research focus and this book will assist supervisors to develop a scholarship on research as a growing field of inquiry.

Professor Labby Ramrathan

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